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SERMONS,

COMPOSED FOR

COUNTRY CONGREGATIONS.

BY THE

REVEREND EDWARD NARES, A.M.

RECTOR OF BIDDENDEN,

IN THE

COUNTY OF KENT,

AND LATE FELLOW OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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TO THE QUEEN.

MADAM,

I FEEL a hope that the plainness and simplicity of the following Discourses will not be thought to render them wholly unworthy of Your Majesty's notice. They were written to instruct the ignorant, not to dazzle or inform the wise. It was a duty arising from my situation, constantly to study perspicuity more than ornament, and to endeavour to be intelligible rather than profound. But Your Majesty is not likely to turn away from them on this account. I believe firmly, that the most unenlightened of His Majesty's subjects are far

far from being the least interesting objects of his paternal care and solicitude; and what care of HIS bosom does not Your Majesty participate?

These considerations, Madam, and others like to these, encourage me to hope, that it may not appear altogether improper, to have endeavoured in this manner to unite the most distant objects, and to have solicited Your Majesty's permission to lay my ministerial labours for the Cottage at the foot of the Throne!

It is with profound respect that I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your Majesty's

most dutiful

and devoted servant,

EDWARD NARES.

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SERMON I.

ON THE FOLLY OF SLIGHTING ADVICE.

GALATIANS iv. 16.

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

IT is acknowledged, that there is nothing more difficult than to procure a good reception for wholesome advice. It generally fares with it as with a nauseous medicine for the diseases of the body; those who need it most, set themselves most against it; nor are they in general content only to reject the proffered remedy, but frequently those who would administer it get mocked and insulted, their right to prescribe is questioned, their knowledge of the case disputed, and all their good endeavours misconstrued into an officiousness about other people's concerns, and a propensity to find fault. True it is, that

SERM. I. advice cannot be offered but at the risk of alarming some of the fondest prejudices to which the human nature is liable. Men are so sensible of their own free will, that they can never help looking upon the generality of their actions, whether bad or good, as eminently their own ways; and yet those who would try to change their manners, must do it in the shape of an objection; nor can they any how manage so, if they are at all honest and sincere, as to conceal their disapprobation of those ways they wish to have amended or changed. Our pride, therefore, and self-love, are very soon alarmed; perhaps, instead of listening to or adopting the advice, to the amendment of our lives, as it was intended, the first measure we take (as if we were sore affronted) is to find some occasion of retorting the accusation: we narrowly inspect the conduct of the adviser, and as all men are human, and weak, and infirm by nature, it would be strange if something or other objectionable was not to be discovered; in consequence of which, the adviser is eagerly pro-

pronounced to be peccable also, and his precepts are all set at naught, with that common proverbial taunt of "*Physician "heal thyself**." It is not upon all occasions that men are so proud and self-sufficient. If they would become instructed in some of the common arts and sciences, in the rules of trade and traffic, they are content to acknowledge others to be wiser than themselves, and they submit themselves to the directions of their instructors freely and willingly. But surely there is an art of life to be learnt, which the wise and experienced are likely to know more of than the young or thoughtless. It is a proof, how much men must be aware of their freedom of will, how sensible they are that a choice is left to them in regard to their actions, that they are so very jealous of having their moral course of life meddled with. The ignorance of common arts is no disgrace to them, so long as they have been unable to be instructed in them; but no man likes to be told, he

SERM. I.

* Luke iv. 23.

SERM. I. does not know how to live honestly and decently, soberly and piously, or to follow after such things as are really and intrinsically of "*good report.*" It was no doubt through a foresight of these difficulties, that the Almighty God condescended, from the very first, to become a teacher himself. Against such an adviser no objections could arise; for, how insignificant is human pride lifted up against the Lord of all! How imperfect the best, how base the highest, of the sons of men, opposed to the perfections and the power of God! His laws, therefore, however contrary they may be to our wills and desires, it is folly and madness to slight or despise. We cannot pretend to say, that he who made us has no right to prescribe to us a particular course of actions; we cannot muster up pride and arrogance enough to think, that we are perfect enough in the sight of an unerring Being, and need no restraint or correction. Let men then suspect as they please the interference and remonstrances of their fellow creatures, they cannot surely object to be reminded

reminded of any deviations from the express law of God. For, what is it we do when we infringe the laws of God? Let our actions upon such occasions be ever so detrimental to the good of our neighbour, the injury we do to ourselves must needs be abundantly greater; we may be brought to make reparation to our neighbour by the common course of juſtice; but, perhaps, before we have made any reparation to God, for the breach of his holy laws, the stroke of death may come upon us, and we may be summoned to judgment in another world! It cannot be doubted, therefore, but that he who reminds another of his transgressions of the laws of God, however his advice and interference may be received, is so far the true and real friend of the transgressor: nor can he, in such a case, be his enemy any how; for, if we suppose that, even in the heat of anger, and the fury of revenge, he shall, with the utmost asperity of language, reproach him for his faults, still it is fortunate, at all events, to be in any manner cautioned against such self-destruction, as the wilful

SERM. I. wilful breach of God's laws must necessarily lead to. It is truly melancholy then to reflect, what fatal mistakes men are apt to make in this respect; how disposed they are to treat those as their most hateful and obnoxious enemies, who are in reality their truest and best friends: how prone they are even to take arms against those who would do them a real and lasting service; and to give way to lusts and passions, that are all the while warring against their souls. But what then is to be done; is no advice to be given? Are those who *can see*, not to stretch out their hand to save the *blind* from falling into the ditch? Are we to suffer our fellow-creatures to rush rudely on to their destruction, and tell them nothing of the dreadful precipice in their way? Are we to manifest our *friendship* by letting them perish untaught and unadvised? Are we to let them wander, and not turn aside to guide them into the paths of peace? No, this is not the part of a man; certainly not of a Christian! We ought all of us, one with another, like the blessed Saviour of the

the world, to put ourselves forward, to be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame! But the Lord of Heaven, who knoweth whereof we are made, has not really left this matter to the mere option and will of man. He has not only given us a law, but he has provided for our constant instruction in it. He has not only spoken the word, but appointed a succession of stewards and ministers to guard and preserve it, and to secure obedience to it. Now it must needs be admitted, that not only in this high and important trust, but even in lesser matters, it is always "*required in stewards* "*that a man be found faithful**;" not temporising with those they have to deal with, but steadily and honestly administering the business of their trust, regardful only of the charge committed to their care. He, therefore, who is called to be an apostle of the Lord, should "*judge it* "*a small thing to be judged of man's judg-* "*ment,*" in the advice he may think it incumbent on him to give, or the reproofs he may feel it necessary to pronounce; he

SERM. I.

* 1 Cor. iv. 2.

must

SERM. I. must boldly maintain the truth, and boldly make it known to the very worst of sinners if they come in his way, leaving it to his Lord and Master to vindicate him in the last day, when the time shall come for setting right the perverse opinions and prejudices of mankind, and for making manifest the hidden counsels of the hearts. What a glorious example did our blessed Lord set us, not only of boldness in doing the work of his Father that had sent him, but of that calm and patient courage which the minister of truth should always manifest; who, "*when he was reviled,*" (as trying a persecution perhaps as any we can be exposed to) "*reviled not again;*" when even through the malice of his enemies "*he suffered, he threatened not,*" but "*committed himself to Him that judgeth righ-*" *teously.*" What an example did the Apostle St. Paul, whose words I am preaching from, set us, through the long and trying course of his ministry. Not only did he despise some of the sorest calamities, and bitterest misfortunes of human life, in travelling about to propagate the truth, but even where his reputation stood high, and his

his popularity was great, never would he pass over a fault to preserve any false fame. It is on this account that his Epistles in general have a peculiar effect and interest; for they were most of them written in consequence of some notice he had received, in his absence from those he was addressing, of their being in danger of falling into error, and of being seduced from the faith. In that particular Epistle, whence my text is taken, and in the words of my text themselves, he proceeds upon this principle. It seems he had been the first to enlighten the Galatians, and draw them away from their idolatrous corruptions to the profession of Christianity; in doing which, as it appears, they had shewn themselves abundantly sensible of their obligations to him, and manifested a regard for him, bordering almost upon enthusiasm: "*I bear* "*your record,*" says he, "*that if it had been* "*possible, ye would have plucked out your* "*eyes and have given them to me.*" This was so great popularity, that surely if he had only coveted mere human glory, he would have rested contented, and meddled with

SERM. I.

SERM. I. with them no more; at least not at any risk. But St. Paul was not such a time-server; he was always equally prepared to censure their misdoings, as though he had no fame to lose, and therefore, as soon as he had notice given him of their being in a wavering state, and in danger from false teachers, he freely admonished them, reminding them of his former regard for them, and of their attachment to him, and boldly demanding of them at once, whether he was to be considered as their "*enemy*," because for the purposes of wholesome correction and advice, he had judged it right to "*tell them the truth*." The regular ministers. of the present day, stand in the place of the Apostles of old. They have the same word to preach, the same sacraments to administer; the same threatenings against sin to denounce, the same promises of pardon and forgiveness, through the blood of Christ. to proclaim; of them, undoubtedly, is required the same vigilance to preserve those committed to their charge, from all errors either of faith or practice; from the seduction of false teachers

teachers as well as from the seduction of sin. It is their duty, their bounden duty, to tell the truth, as it is revealed in the word of God; and let ever so great personal prejudices be raised against them, or stand in their way, nevertheless it can, in the nature of things, only be for the good of those they address, that in the several administrations, above alluded to, they do "*the will of God*;" for the will of God, in the Gospel of our blessed Lord, is express. It does not depend for its efficacy upon those who undertake to expound it, but, being there delivered in plain and explicit terms, it must have always the same weight and force whenever it is justly and properly administered. In merely expounding the word, there may be room for error, and therefore ground for objection; and the only care that could be taken to guard against such evils as might ensue from the mistakes of incompetent expositors, was taken, at the first planting of the Gospel, by committing it, pure and uncontaminated, to the keeping of a regular ministry, and providing

SERM. I. viding for a perpetual succession of them, to be set apart for ever for the peculiar study of the law of God. But a faithful and true steward of God's mysteries, need not run into long expositions to convince men of their errors; if he will but be careful to lay before them the indispensable conditions of Christ's covenant with mankind, he will discharge his duty; and he that hath ears to hear, should listen and be converted. This is the case at all events. Let men judge as they please: the minister's duty is clear and express; but yet, let us not suppose it to be altogether so uninteresting a concern, as that he who teaches, should have no regard to the effect of his doctrines; whosoever has a just sense of the high and great importance of the duties of Christianity, cannot view with indifference any base neglect of them. Cold must be that heart which, mindful only of its own concerns, does not shudder at the thoughts of the sure perdition others may be hurrying themselves into. Cold must be the heart of him who, wrapped up in his own righteousness, can behold the misdoings of others without

without sorrow and compunction. Can *he*, think ye, be your *friend*, who, knowing on the word of truth, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord in the glory of heaven, can forbear to tell you so, when he sees that your conduct is daily leading you further and further from the great hope of your calling? Shall he be thought your *enemy*, who, certified past all doubt and disputation, that neither "*fornicators*, *idolators*, or *adulterers*, neither *thieves*, *nor covetous*, *nor revilers*, *nor drunkards*, *nor extortioners*, *shall inherit the kingdom of God*," shall venture to remind you of such a truth, though from the application he may chance to wound your feelings! God forbid that such charges should be applicable to those I am addressing; but if it were so, it would not only equally be my duty, from this place, as an authorized minister of Christ's Gospel, boldly to preach among you the word of God, and enforce all his holy injunctions; but if I had the common feelings of a man, I ought the more to be moved to it from a just consideration of the perils awaiting you.

SERM. I. you. When, therefore, you are reminded at any time by myself or others, so appointed, of the great danger of sin and wickedness, do not suffer your feelings so to get the better of your reason, as to fancy us your "*enemies because we tell you the* "*truth.*"—The truths which the ministers of Christ's Gospel have to promulgate, all relate to your eternal welfare. None of us have any power to denounce them as irrevocable sentences. If we tell you, that "*the sinful soul will be cut off,*" and that at the last day "*the Lord will not at all acquit* "*the wicked,*" we are not such inspectors and judges of the heart as to be able to know to whom such heavy condemnation shall finally apply; we are instructed rather to hope well of all, not to deliver over to damnation the wicked soul, but "*to* call *sin*-"*ners* to repentance," that they may in time, and before it is too late, "*turn from their* "*wickedness and live.*" Our's is, in its very nature, always a friendly call; while we condemn and reprobate the sin, we strive all we can to redeem the sinner. Let us all then, as a main step towards the amend-

ment of our lives, learn to think properly of those who put themselves to the pains of giving us advice and instruction; but, above all, of those who seek to guide us by the light of God's word; for, in this case, we may be sure that the seed is good, and that if it produces no fruit, the fault must be in the soil into which it falls; that is, in short, in the perverse disposition of the hearers. For great is the efficacy of the word of God towards instructing and improving his creatures; if his creatures on their part will but prepare themselves to receive it. "*The rain*," and "*the snow*" that "*descends from heaven to water the earth*, "*and make it bring forth and bud, that it may* "*give seed to the sower, and bread to the* "*eater*," will produce no such effects on the sandy desart or barren rock; so neither will the word of God bring forth in us the fruits of the spirit, unless we duly prepare our hearts to give it entrance and admission. Then only will it "*accomplish that* "*which God pleases, and prosper in the thing* "*whereto He sends it.*"

SERM. I.

Never

SERM. I.

Never then be disposed to think that he who administers among you the word of God, though he should chance to touch upon some failings of which you know yourselves to be guilty, is therefore to be looked upon as an enemy, or even as not so indulgent to human failings, as one frail being should be to another; for indulgence in this case is quite out of the question. The law of God is a law of general and constant obligation, as binding upon the preacher, as upon him who is to be admonished. And, in fact, if instead of weighing and considering the truths that are told you, you bend your thoughts rather to the mode in which they are delivered; if, instead of asking for the "*old paths*," as the Prophet directs, "*that ye may walk* "*therein, and find rest to your souls*," you determine to receive him as your enemy, who in obedience to the spirit of God, stands forth in contradiction to your sins, as "*an example to you in word, in conversation,* "*in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*," perhaps you will never find the remedy you pretend to be seeking: for though St. Paul,

with great justice, made it a part of his apostolic character, to become "*all things* "*to all men,*" that in propagating the Gospel of Christ, he might, as he tells us himself, "*gain the more*;" yet this must be understood with limitations, and referred only to things indifferent. St. Paul did not become a sinner himself, to gain sinners—he did not transgress God's laws to gain other transgressors. Therefore, neither must you expect that those who minister to you, are at liberty to condescend to such infirmities; but it is your part to distinguish between their *hatred* of your *sins*, and their *regard* for *you*. God's word cannot be administered otherwise; for how justly would you be offended to be reproved and corrected for your own sins by as base a sinner as yourselves? whereas, it is but probable that he who would recommend to you, either by precept or example, the first duties of life, may appear unfriendly, in that he may seem too severe, or too particular; too temperate for the glutton and drunkard, too chaste and regular for the adulterer, too just and honest for the extortioner,

SERM. I.

SERM. I. tioner, too pious for the reprobate; nevertheless, these are they who must most need the wholesome corrections of God's righteous laws, and so long as they suffer their unruly passions so to get the better of their reason, as to lead them to fancy those who tell them the truth, to be their enemies, how are they to be amended?—Receive ye then the word of God always with fear and reverence, and let no personal, private, or worldly considerations move you, to turn from the truth, when it is properly placed before you. It may be, that he who reproves and warns you, though he is but discharging a duty of his own in doing so, may sincerely, and from his very heart, be intrinsically your friend; but at all events be sure that, inasmuch as he only claims, to guide and direct your steps in the way of righteousness and true holiness, he *cannot* be your "*Enemy*."

SERMON

SERMON II.

ON THE GOOD EFFECTS OF RELIGION.

ISAIAH XI. 9.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

THIS is part of a prophecy which, in a great degree, remains to be fulfilled. Those who have applied themselves to the study of the prophetic parts of the Holy Scriptures, have been long agreed, that there is a future state of peace and happiness foretold, which is to take place upon this very earth we inhabit, through the prevalence of the Christian religion. There is nothing mysterious in the prophecy, except inasmuch as it must seem to require the particular interposition of Providence; so little at present are men agreed to give full effect to the Gospel of our Saviour. There

SERM. II. is no mystery in the consequences foretold, if men would but embrace the Gospel as they should do; for sure enough no true Christian could hurt or destroy, or do any violence to his neighbour, or in any way interrupt the peace and harmony of the world, so long as he held himself bound to be governed by the laws of his Redeemer. For the Gospel of Christ is peace and love —peace with our Maker, and peace with man.—By the Gospel of Christ alone we are to be reconciled to our heavenly Father; and we are not to be entitled to the benefits of this most glorious covenant, but upon the condition that we love our neighbour as ourselves.—True enough we must confess that this world has so long interfered with the concerns of religion, that perhaps there is no command in the whole Scriptures more generally infringed than this very one of loving our neighbour as ourselves. It is difficult to say how this great and grievous error first got to such a head, as it has done, and perhaps it is more difficult to say, how we are to apply a remedy. Now-a-days, a man is not willing to act by his

his neighbour as he would by himself, be- SERM.
cause, perhaps, he too truly knows that it II.
is the last thing his neighbour would do by him. His heart is hardened, because he thinks that in similar circumstances his neighbour's heart would be hardened against him; and this too often satisfies his conscience.—I say too often; for Christianity does not even admit of this excuse. Christianity does not lay laws upon us, which our passions are left to interpret. Her laws are meant to controul our own passions first, and not merely to coerce and restrain those of our neighbours. The laws of Christianity entirely regard the individual; the conduct of others will be no defence, nor afford any palliation, except in the case of absolute violence. What we ought really and solely to think of, is not, how bad others are, but how we can prove ourselves to be good and faithful servants of the blessed Jesus. And when we consider what the consequences really would be of every man's acting up to this rule, it is truly melancholy to think that men cannot agree upon a point so important. A Christian ought to

do

SERM. II. do good, though he should be only requited with ill; but if all men would resolve to be Christians in heart, then every man in particular would be a gainer. While I tried to serve my neighbour, my neighbour would be trying to serve me. The same principle would govern both; kindness would be repaid with kindness, friendship with friendship; my honesty and integrity would be his security, and his honesty and integrity mine; but if we will not govern ourselves by this principle, all is put out of order. When one man happens to act by another otherwise than a Christian should do, this second begins to waver also: one bad office is requited by another; and the first that goes astray, has the transgressions of both to answer for. Not that the latter is acquitted, but the first error is of so much more importance, as it operates to prevent and hinder the good intentions of others, and perhaps may be multiplied afterwards to the ruin and destruction of thousands. The true Christian, however, is bound to consider, that the laws of God are not to be set aside by the frowardness of

of man. Perhaps it may seem to be a sort of defence dictated by nature, that we should retaliate injuries, and avenge ourselves. It would seem as if the holy Apostle, St. Paul, almost acknowledged this to be, if not natural, at least difficult to be resisted, because he has, in so strong terms, inculcated a different rule of conduct. He advises us to leave other men's actions to be judged by God, and have an eye only to our own. "*Be not wise in your own conceits;*" "*recompense to no man evil for evil;*" "*provide things honest in the sight of all men;*" this is the surest ground to go upon; "*and if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*" This is not spoken like a teacher who knew nothing of the world: he would seem from these very expressions to have known it full well. He probably knew that such is the wantonness of human nature, that oftentimes the best and quietest men are not suffered to live peaceably with those around them, without submitting more, than as men, is to be expected of them. He only exhorts us to do it

SERM. II.

it therefore, "*if it be possible, and as much* "*as lieth in us.*" But how few of us comply with this! How suddenly impetuous many are, upon the slightest provocation! How in a moment are we stirred up to retaliate an offence! We give ourselves no time to weigh the circumstances; perhaps he who has offended us, may have done it unintentionally; perhaps he has been deceived; perhaps he has only done what we ourselves should have done in the like situation. These are points which a true Christian should weigh and consider before he condemns or blames others; and if he would do so, no doubt but the matter might be settled so as to endanger neither. Instead of this, we judge hastily, forgetful all the while that we ourselves are to be judged hereafter; nor is it to be doubted, that many live thus at variance with those around them, who yet know that their own trespasses against their Maker will only be forgiven, in proportion as they forgive those who trespass against them. It is amazing to think how difficult it is to make men under-

understand their own interest. Those who seem to us to understand it best, perhaps understand it least of all. Religion, in fact, is the *one thing* needful; and yet too generally, instead of being thought needful, it is of all things most neglected, and postponed for every description of worldly pursuits. Those who do not wholly neglect it, trifle with it. They think it consists in a few ceremonies, a few prayers, and a few professions of belief; whereas it ought to be the prime business of life. Though we should have recourse to it, on particular and pressing occasions, to comfort us under sorrow, to support us under pain, to relieve us in any heavy distress of body or soul: yet this is but making it a remedy for evils that may be occasional and temporary; but religion well understood holds out to us a prize for which we ever ought to be contending. And this prize is best suited to our wishes, be they what they may; for all our wishes, however diversified, must centre in this, that we alike desire to be prosperous and happy. Religion will accomplish the point for every one of us, if we

SERM. II.

we will but be ruled by the lessons she inculcates. True it is, she perhaps may put most of us out of our way. To one, she may say, you are wrong; you are heaping up riches to no good end; you will be mistaken at last, if you are not cautious, for not only moth and rust will soon be making depredations on your perishable coffers, but if you have not charity, all your wealth shall avail you nothing; but if you would be "*the elect of God, holy and beloved,* "*put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness* "*of mind, meekness, long-suffering; above all* "*things put on charity, which is the bond of per-* "*fectness.*" To a second, perhaps, who she sees, striving hard to raise himself above his fellows, religion will cry out, to *humble* himself, if not in the sight of men, at least in the sight of God.

There is a natural pride in the soul of man, which tempts him, when he compares himself with other men, to fancy himself not only equal, as a partaker of the same flesh and blood, but in some respect or other superior: thus the strong seek

seek to overcome the weak; the wise, the foolish; the rich, the poor; and, since human nature is much alike, perhaps at the same time the weak are wishing to be strong, and the foolish wise, and the poor rich, to do just the same, and lord it over their fellows. Now religion alone can teach us to be humble, and yet meet every man's wishes. Religion alone can raise and elevate us all; but she will do it on her own terms, and not on our's: if we are wise, or strong, or mighty in our own conceits, instead of raising she will depress us; he that by any overbearing insolence, or idle presumption, shall think to exalt himself, this man will effectually lose his aim, and in the end be put down and abased. Religion will tell the ambitious man, that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him; and again, that he resisteth the proud and giveth grace only to the humble: perhaps this may put the ambitious very much out of his way; perhaps, for a time, it may mortify him greatly to take this course

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course of meekness and humility; yet it would be unwise not to stand corrected, for he that is far above, has pointed out the only road for the ambitious to take— "*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand* "*of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*" There are others who are continually seeking after happiness, whom religion alone could put right, though not perhaps without likewise greatly thwarting their present inclinations; these are the intemperate and voluptuous. If these men looked to any future happiness, they would not seek to compass it in the way they do; but these men are all for present happiness; a short-lived elevation of spirits, and freedom from care. It is amazing what a friend religion would be to such persons, if they would but condescend to listen to her. These men are not only pursuing a phantom, but they are every day putting themselves more out of the way of happiness. They cannot gratify their appetites to excess, without transgressing many of the precepts of the Gospel; nor let it be supposed that these precepts were

meant to rob us of our pleasures; they are meant exceedingly to increase them: for, besides that intemperance will soon end all earthly pleasures and enjoyments whatever, the lusts of the flesh will have no objects in the world to come; great, therefore, must be our torments, if the desires shall remain when they can never more be gratified; and possibly this may be in a great measure the punishment of the wicked: having made no provision for the other world, they shall find themselves, when they get there, in a strange country, forlorn and helpless, and sighing after past pleasures, while the good and righteous, those who shall have passed through this life as pilgrims, setting their affections on things above, shall in the other world have all their desires gratified, and live in the midst of pleasures for ever more. Fourthly, to apply to the words of my text, whatever we may think to gain by a froward behaviour, by pursuing our own schemes, regardless of the feelings of our neighbour, by craft and cunning, by violence and wrong, we may be certain we should more surely

SERM. II. surely gain our points by following the precepts of religion; most especially of the Gospel of Christ. It cannot be any man's interest to have the world in general wicked and headstrong: a state of warfare is always a state of risk and danger; what we might gain ourselves by any evil art, we might soon lose in some other shape (if not perhaps ten-fold), by the bad example we set, and the licence we give to others to act the same by us—whereas, if "*the earth were but full of the* "*knowledge of the Lord, they should not* "*hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain.*" All would do good in their stations, and none would do harm; the strong would help the weak, the wise would instruct the simple, the rich would comfort the poor, and the poor would respect the rich. Let any man read the New Testament, and weigh well the lessons it teaches; and he must have a poor judgment if he does not admit that this would really be the case. Is it not hard then, that when we can agree together to carry into execution many worldly projects, we can come to no agreement

ment to cultivate and propagate, to the utmost, what would give peace and security to us all; when the great God of heaven has so loved us, and made our case his own, as to take our very nature upon him, to save and to redeem us, why cannot we make his cause our's, and resolve, not only to cultivate his religion ourselves, but to encourage it in others? Is there any Christian charity in being so selfish, as to be careful only for ourselves? Religion is the only sure hope we have; it is sure to benefit every individual who embraces it, and it is sure to do good in society so far as it extends. Let us then remember, that besides having regard to our own deportment, we shall do well to look to the deportment of others. If we have an influence over any who shew a disregard to religion, let us exert it to the utmost to bring them into the way of truth. A high reward is promised to those who engage successfully in such a task; "*They* "*that be wise,*" says the Prophet, "*shall* "*shine as the brightness of the firmament;* "*and they that turn many to righteousness as* "*the*

SERM. II. "*the stars for ever and ever.*" Those who can do good in this way, are chargeable with any neglect in not doing it. As it is easy to know who frequents the temple of God, it is easy to know who they are that do not; such should excite our suspicion; not any base and uncharitable suspicions, but the suspicions of a Christian; we should entertain an apprehension for them, lest here or hereafter they come to harm. In bringing them back to the paths of religion, if they have been by chance or passion seduced to leave them, we shall be sure to consult *their* interest both here and hereafter; and our own, inasmuch as their reformation will redound to our praise; and the interest of society at large, inasmuch as a religious man is always the safest, and most trust-worthy, and best neighbour we can have; in short, if we would but agree to be religious ourselves, and, as far as possible, teach and encourage others to be so, this world might be rendered like to heaven, for "*the* "*wicked would cease from troubling,*" and then "*the weary*" might be "*at rest*; "*nation would no more lift up the sword* "*against*

"*against nation,*" nor, for our defence, SERM. either at home or abroad, need we "*learn* II. "*war any more.*" I fear this is an event more to be wished than expected, but if perfection is out of our reach, let us yet endeavour to advance. Righteousness, we are told, exalteth a nation; it will certainly also exalt individuals, so that every step we take, we shall gain something. But, after all, it does not depend on compact and agreement, and we should very much mistake the matter if we were to think it did. It is at all times the duty, the indispensable duty, of every man, both to worship his Maker and to keep his laws; and the laws of our Maker are sufficiently promulgated. Surely we cannot be ignorant, that it is required of us to testify our faith in God, through Christ, by good works? The first and great commandment is known to us all; Nature dictates it, and Revelation has confirmed it: we all stand bound, by every consideration that can have weight with a rational being, to love, to honor, and to fear the Lord our God, with every faculty

SERM. II. of the heart, the soul, and the mind. And the second commandment is as generally acknowledged, though perhaps we are not aware how continually we violate it; for the law it inculcates, is explained by another most plain and easy doctrine, which none can misunderstand, and which should for ever be our guide, namely, that in all cases whatsoever, we "*do to others, as we "would they should do to us.*" What a scene of harmony, quiet, and tranquillity, would ensue, if each man would suffer himself to be governed by these two principles; we should then need no compact or agreement, the consequences would flow from ourselves. If every man would be righteous, every man would be secure; we should have no more jealousies or envyings, no more murmuring and complaining, no more strife and hatred, no more malice and revenge; added to all which, we should each be so much forwarder in the way of salvation, so much nearer to the high prize of our calling, through the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. God exacts not your services for his own sake, it is all for

for your's: for, "*how can a man be profita-* SERM.
"*ble unto God? or is it any gain to him if* II.
"*thou makest thy ways perfect? If thou be*
"*righteous what givest thou him? or what*
"*receiveth he at thy hand?*" The truth of all I have advanced is manifest and clear; he that desires to be happy here, and blessed hereafter; he that is disposed to honor God, and live well with his neighbour; he who hopes for salvation through Christ, and would shew forth his faith accordingly, all such are called upon to do what they can to promote, in every way possible, the knowledge of the Lord, that "*the earth may be full of righteousness*
"*as the waters cover the sea.*"

SERMON III.

SIN WITHOUT EXCUSE.

ROMANS VII. 15.

For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

WHETHER the holy Apostle says this of himself, as some have fancied, or only by a figure of speech, as most others suppose, assumes the character he is representing, to soften the reproof, it would, I fear, be vain to look for such perfection among the sons of men at present, as should render the terms of the accusation inapplicable, even to the generality of Christians; and, therefore, to ourselves among the rest. Though there might seem to be much merit in such a confession, as arguing a just sense of one's own infirmities, yet no confession could more

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strongly set forth the alarming nature of man's weakness. It is a confession, indeed, which so far from pleading any excuse for our transgressions, greatly aggravates our failures. In exposing our weakness, we acknowledge our strength; we do not pretend to say we were compelled to submit, but that we have yielded unnecessarily, and even with great baseness and ignominy thrown down our arms. And yet it is to be feared that no more suitable form of confession could be devised for any of us: we have none of us surely been so compelled to yield to temptations, as to be able to plead a perfect inability, to have done, or to have judged better; as Christians undoubtedly, if we would presume to call ourselves such, this never can have been the case; for in addition to the law written in our hearts, and urged upon us by our conscience, and befides the written laws of God promulgated in the Holy Scripture, we have a promise of the aid and co-operation of the spirit of God himself, to strengthen and uphold us, if we do but shew ourselves disposed to resist as we should

should do. It is not then to be doubted but that all *our* sins and wickednesses carry with them this heavy aggravation, that we are always sufficiently instructed not to approve them in our hearts. That what we do, in opposition to God's laws, we dare not pretend to justify; we dare not presume to say that even our freedom as moral beings, or our condition as rational creatures, allows of it; for while the flesh is rebellious, a will is nevertheless always present to us by the very laws of our nature, pointing to what is good; so that even the Gentiles had a law, and an internal monitor and witness in their own consciences, that tacitly served to accuse or excuse all the motions of their hearts. But we Christians, as it has been already observed, have much more to depend on, and be governed by. We are fenced round and fortified by all that can give security against attack, or encouragement under resistance. We have no surprize to apprehend; for we are forewarned, and put sufficiently on our guard. The enemy is not hidden from our view; we may see him at a dis-

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a distance; snares and ambush will not avail him, unless we voluntarily become his prey. Even no advantage can be gained over us, by excess of strength or numbers; the faithful and steady Christian need not be afraid, though a host of enemies should encamp against him; with "*his loins girt* "*with truth, and having on the breast-plate of* "*righteousness, and his feet shod with the pre-* "*paration of the gospel of peace*;" with "*his* "*shield of faith*, and *his helmet of salvation*;" and, above all, "*the sword of the spirit,* "*which is the word of God*;" he may stand fast in the darkest day of trial and temptation, and resist all the attacks of this wicked world, his own sinful flesh, and the wiles of the devil. Such is the security provided by the eternal God for the soul of man. The terms are figurative, but the fact is plain and intelligible; if God be for us, who can be against us? or what temptation or stratagem can prevail against us? Yet with all these means of defence at command, we give way at the first summons often, and go over to the enemy for the rest of our lives: but God is not to be mocked.

mocked. We presume to call ourselves Christians, and unless we abandon the very name and profession, we are, by our own consent, bound to obey the laws of the Gospel: and it is to be remarked, that these laws are so eminently consonant to the perfection of man's nature, and they tend to place us so very high in the estimation of our fellow creatures, that we are for the most part jealous enough of the service we have chosen, and it is not without offence that we submit to be told that we are *not* Christians. But what a mockery it is to pretend to be a Christian, without taking any pains to fulfil the terms of that everlasting covenant. In the ordinary concerns of life, we do nothing so preposterous: the soldier studies the art of war, knowing that the name alone will not stand him in any stead; the husbandman does not look to reap, without the care and precaution of a previous sowing; in all cases, of this nature, the name is derived from the practice of the profession, and not made a substitute for the care and application incumbent on those who pretend

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to it. But what are our exertions in the cause of Christianity? Do we think to compass Heaven by a vain and hypocritical cry, of "*Lord, Lord!*" How shall we answer for ourselves when enquiry comes to be made, not into the services of our lips, but how we have applied ourselves to "*do the will of our Father which is in* "*Heaven?*" To prove ourselves Christians, as well in deed as in name, we ought to have a long account to produce, of passions subdued, and appetites restrained; of vice discountenanced, and virtue approved; of adversity patiently submitted to, prosperity gratefully acknowledged; sins repented of, charities exercised, temptations resisted; faith manifested, and the ignorance of foolish men, and the forwardness of the wicked, put to silence and shame by our well-doing, and Christian steadiness. Greatly do we deceive ourselves, if we imagine we can be Christians on any other terms. Be consistent, and lay down the name and title when you act contrary to your profession. Add not hypocrisy to heighten all your transgressions. Confess your-

yourselves to be rebels, and then commit your sins; this would be at least ingenuous, and deserve the praise of consistency and truth; but you, that call yourselves Christians, do you without scruple fulfil the lusts of the flesh; do you, that pretend to walk in the spirit of Christ, indulge yourselves in "*adulteries, fornication, un-*" *cleanness, lasciviousness?*" Do *you* live in "*hatred and variance, emulations, wrath,* "*and strife?*" Do *you* foment and encourage "*seditions and heresies, envyings, mur-*" *ders, drunkenness, revellings, and such* "*like?*" Above all, do you accustom yourselves to act without remorse, as the text expresses it, in open neglect of the good you pretend to approve, and committing the evils you are forced to condemn? leaving undone what, as a Christian, you would and ought to do, and doing as an Infidel, what as a Christian you hate and abominate? These are the things which, in the day of judgment, will be enquired into; and every day of our lives here, gives us occasion to add to, or to rectify, the errors in our account. Not that we

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SERM. III. are to suppose ourselves so ill off, as to imagine that the name of Christian will be a snare to us. Sin and wickedness indeed, it is most certain, are more hateful, more heinous, and more inexcusable in a Christian, than in those who have not partaken of the light of Christ's revelation; but then it only is so, because the duty of a Christian is made so plain and intelligible to him, his security is rendered so easy by faith and obedience, the promises of assistance are so abundant, the hope of pardon so lively, the rewards held out to him so transcendant, and his services put upon so easy and interesting a footing, that it is impossible he should err, but either through the most obstinate wilfulness, or the most gross neglect, that human frailty can give birth to. If then we would be rash enough to think of laying down the profession of Christianity, in order to obtain more liberty of action, let us remember, that besides the guilt of apostacy, which we must necessarily incur, we must be content to give up all the hopes and expectations of Christianity; we

we must not expect to be allowed to plead the merits of Christ to atone for our transgressions, nor to claim his promises of mercy and intercession. We must forego the prospects of becoming joint-heirs with him in the kingdom of God's glory, or of becoming one with the Father, in the vital union which is clearly foretold to the true believer. It is not given us to know the distinctions that will take place in the world to come; but we have unquestionably good ground to believe, that great distinctions will have place there. To every man God will render *according to* his deeds; so that he that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Though, then, we would not exclude those from hope in Christ at the last day, who, according to God's own eternal purposes have been kept from the light of the Gospel here below, yet it is no imputation either on his goodness or his justice, to suppose, that the true Christian may be allowed to indulge hopes of a higher state of glory, than those who have not been blessed

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blessed with the light of revelation. Those who have not had this divine law to govern them will be judged without the law, and indulgence will be proportionably shewn to them; but the Christian *has* a law, and many duties to fulfil; his salvation will not be altogether a mere act of mercy, but will come to him in the shape at least, of a boon promised, and a reward offered, upon the condition of his having contributed to work out his own salvation. The hopes of glory then, attached to the profession of Christianity, are not rendered so transcendently great through any blind preference or partiality, but because more is expected of the Christian, more is promised to him. Others may be in a condition only to sow sparingly; if these reap sparingly they will yet have the harvest that was their due; but if the Christian has had so abundant talents given to him, that in the way of salvation, and true Christian charity and goodness, he may be able to sow bountifully, he may reasonably expect his just harvest too; and have hopes of reaping as bountifully as he has sowed.

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Christianity, therefore, is not to be laid aside without certain loss; nor is it to be retained to any effect, unless we faithfully endeavour to live up to the terms of it. If, therefore, we have such a just sense of the glorious hopes of Christianity, and of the amiable character of its morality, that we would wish both to be, and to be thought Christians; and if, besides, we feel so sensible of our manifold weaknesses and infirmities, as to be willing to confess, with the holy Apostle, that we continually both leave undone those things which we ought to do, and do those things which we ought not to do, surely it greatly concerns us to carry our attention a little further, and endeavour both to discover the cause of such gross transgressions, and to ascertain the remedy. The holy Apostle has, in a great measure, done this for us, by discoursing at large of those two leading principles, as it were, of human action, which, though designed to harmonize together, had got so much out of order as to be perpetually in opposition to each other—" *The flesh*," says he, " *lusteth against the Spirit, and the* " *Spirit*

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" *Spirit against the flesh.*" Our blessed Lord, indeed, had given the same account of human weakness, accompanying it with a caution to his wavering disciples, " *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into* " *temptation, the Spirit indeed is willing, but* " *the flesh is weak.*" But we need not go further, to have a full view of the matter, than to the very chapter whence my text is taken. And, first, St. Paul alledges, in some excuse of the errors acknowledged in my text, " *Now then it is no more* " *I that do it, but* Sin *that dwelleth in mé,*" in which observation, though he does not in fact extenuate his fault, yet he rightly esteems the true dignity of our nature, as purified by Christianity, for the Christian ought to be so averse from sin, as to hold no fellowship at all with it; as far as the Christian acts amiss, he sells himself into bondage, his actions are not his own, but the works of the devil. The holy Apostle, aware of this, disowns those principles within him which encourage sin, or rather, I should say, considers them as external foes, foreign to his nature as a Christian: " *I de-*

" *I delight in the law of God after the inner* SERM.
" *man, but I see another law in my members,* III.
" *warring against the law of my mind, and*
" *bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.*"
With a just sense of the disgrace and ignominy of so base a subjection of his soul and spirit, he exclaims, " *O wretched man*
" *that I am, who shall deliver me from the*
" *body of this Death?*" There is something very emphatic in the word body, as here applied; the body of this Death. Let us frame to ourselves what notions we will, of the soul and spirit, we need be at no loss to discover the entire nature, and full extent, of our bodily appetites and desires. These constitute that sinful flesh that wars against the spirit, and which, unless subdued and mortified, and brought into subjection, before it is too late, will tend to the destruction both of soul and body: " For," as St. James expresses it, " when
" Lust hath conceived it bringeth forth
" Sin, and Sin, when it is finished, bring-
" eth forth Death *." We need not then

* James i. 15.

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bewilder ourselves, in any vain attempt to ascertain the nature, or the operations of the spirit, whether it be of our own spiritual part, the soul, or of the eternal Spirit of God, which is promised to us as an assistant to the exertions of the true believer. We may rest assured, that by the spirit we ought, as Christians, to be so united to God, as to be perpetually mindful of the state *we are to come to*; to remember, that while the body is compelled, from its nature, to seek its present good among the objects of sense and appetite here below, the spirit of man is capable of soaring aloft, and of contemplating the joys of Heaven, where fleshly appetites will no more prevail, and whither the body cannot ascend, till it has been so changed and purified as to be no longer earthy and terrestrial. The body, then, is always to be kept subordinate to the soul, otherwise, not only our own spirit will soon be brought into captivity to the law of Sin, but the union that might subsist between the Spirit of God and our own souls, must necessarily be dissolved. "*We are not debtors to the*

"*flesh,*"

" *flesh,*" (that mortal and perishable part of us) " *to live after the flesh. For if we* " *live after the flesh,*" that is, if we are content to place our chief good in the short-lived gratifications of our fleshly appetites here, regardless of the eternal life promised us hereafter, then " *we shall die,*" or, in other words, we shall not be raised to a life of glory. But, " *if through the* " *spirit we mortify*" and keep under " *the* " *deeds of the body,*" if we use the body only as a terrestrial abode, to be thrown off when this mortal life ends, and not to be indulged beyond the bounds that reason and nature points out, then " *we shall live,*" our spirit shall survive the tumults, and troubles, and temptations of this state of trial, and be admitted to scenes more suited to its pure and perfect nature, the joys of Heaven, where Sin can no more solicit, nor false pleasures and delights mislead; in the former case, the pampered body that confined our views to this lower state of things, that drew aside the soul from the thoughts of Heaven, and brought it into bondage to Sin, shall carry it down

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SERM. III. with it into perdition, to be lost and swallowed up of Sin and Death. In the latter case, the firm aud steady spirit, that shall have duly governed and moderated the fleshly appetites and desires, that shall have exalted and raised the thoughts to the throne of God's Majesty, that shall have asserted and maintained its proper dignity, and kept itself, as far as possible, unspotted from the world, shall not only in the last day ascend itself to Heaven, but have efficacy also, through the co-operating influence of God's grace, to quicken again the mortal body, to raise it from the grave, and carry it upwards to the realms of light, purified and adorned by the mercies of the Redeemer. "*Ter-*"*restrial,*" heretofore, suddenly shall it become "*celestial;*" "*sown in corruption,*" it shall ascend "*in corruption*;" "*sown* "*in dishonor,*" with all the contaminations of this wicked world adhering to it, "*it shall be raised in glory*" and honor; "*sown in weakness, it shall be raised in* "*power.*" Shall we then have such sordid notions of Christianity, as to think that it shall

shall consist in a few prayers, and a few bendings of the body, and not consider that the profession of a Christian is a perpetual state of warfare, in which rewards and honors are proposed to the faithful, active, and steady Christian, transcending our utmost conceptions; that any over-care about the things of this world, is a fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, and leading to the perdition of the soul, whereas, if we will but make the Gospel of Christ our first and incessant concern, doing every thing in such a manner as to redound to the glory of God, and keeping our thoughts constantly fixed on the condition we are to come to, we shall not only secure both body and soul from the pains of hell, but through the grave and gate of Death, which now have an aspect alarming enough even to the most resolute mind, we shall pass to a joyful resurrection. As you are Christians then, let me exhort you, as much as in you lies, to remember the laws, the pure and holy laws, of your Saviour and Redeemer, and to serve him with zeal and fidelity. What your consciences allow not,

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not, be careful not to do; but use your diligence to prove yourselves Christians, in deed as well as in name; and may God, of his special grace, not only at all times, and on all occasions, put into your minds good desires, but by his continual help and providence, bring the same to good effect; or, as the collect of the day expresses it, "that we may obtain that which "he doth promise," may he teach and make us to "love that only which he doth "command."

SERMON

SERMON IV.

ON THE SECURITY ARISING FROM A RELIGIOUS COURSE OF LIFE.

1 PETER III. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

NEXT to the desire of happiness, or rather, connected with it as a co-incident passion, is the fear of evil; for to chance, and change, and temporary misfortunes, all men are in this life indiscriminately liable. Therefore it is, that all the plans we form, and exertions we make, to promote our felicity, are accompanied generally with measures of defence, and means of securing the benefits we seek to obtain. We know not whence the shock may come, how soon, or how late, that may disappoint our designs, and overthrow the fabric we are rearing: prudence, therefore, dictates

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SERM. IV. to us, to put ourselves on our guard in every way possible, and to arm ourselves against all fortuitous circumstances, by every method that may be in our power.

But the misfortune is, that as many deviate in their search after happiness, some pursuing it by crooked paths and by-ways, some seeking to compass it by sinister means, and some building their expectations of it on treacherous ground; so many err in the means of security they are disposed to adopt; some rest on feeble and tottering supports, some rely on friends that fail them, some even mistake the very instruments of their destruction, for weapons of defence! Thus, as the holy Psalmist remarked of the ages that are passed, and foretold of the ages to come, "*There are some that put their trust in their* "*goods, and boast themselves in the multitude* "*of their riches* *." Some "*put their trust*" in vainer things still, "*in chariots and* "*horses* †;" some in the self-sufficiency of

* Ps. xlix. 6. † Ps. xx. 7.

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their wicked hearts impiously oppose themselves to the Almighty himself. For "*the* "*ungodly is so proud that he* careth not *for* "God; *neither is God in all his thoughts*; *he* "*says in his heart, I shall never be cast down*; "*there shall no harm happen unto me**." To enumerate but these few of the many errors men run into on this score (but these, indeed, the most fatal and destructive), we may still trace in all, the influence of the two prevailing principles above alluded to. For *their* desires of happiness these men think abundantly provided for by false pleasures and vain delights, while their dread of evil is lulled to rest, and they repose in a temporary slumber of security, unaware, or not considering, that their "*riches*" may "*make* "*to themselves wings, and flee away*;" unaware, that "*when they die they shall carry* "*nothing away with them, neither will their* "*pomp follow them*;" unaware, that "*de-* "*struction and unhappiness are before them;*" that in the midst of their irrational and

SERM. IV.

* Ps. x. 4. 6.

impious

SERM. IV. impious career, the Lord may arise to "*scatter his enemies,*" disappoint their vain projects, and cast them down for ever!

If then there be, in the whole compass of religious or political maxims, any infallible method of security to be discovered, applicable to all our transactions, and expedient in all our pursuits, as it would be madness in the extreme not to govern ourselves by it when understood, so would it be inhumanity in the extreme not to point it out to those who may be unhappily ignorant of it. Such a maxim, the words of my text seem indisputably to amount to; for, "*who is he that will harm "you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*" Of the several evils of life, these words indeed seem principally to have regard to such as we have to fear from the rest of mankind; from the malevolence of such as may be our enemies among our fellow creatures: and in this light it will be the purpose of this discourse, chiefly, to consider them. Yet it might be easily shewn, that "*to follow that which is good,*" would be

be a main preservative against even the calamities that occur in the course of nature; for, besides that the good are always under the especial protection of God, the practice of virtue conduces eminently to the comfort of life, fortifying the body against physical evils by temperance and moderation, and securing our peace of mind by subduing all irregular passions, and directing our affections to objects deserving of them. But these points depend entirely on man's own management; and such is the wise order of Providence, that the evils commonly point out the remedies, though the perverseness of many lead them so lamentably to neglect the very means of their own cure. But, in guarding ourselves against the evils which the enmity of mankind may bring upon us, caution is to be taken, as well to counteract the bad disposition of others, as to correct our own. In many ways are we exposed to sore hurt and injury: we may be assaulted by the violent, deceived by the crafty, traduced by the slanderer, or borne down by the oppressor; against these attacks,

SERM. IV. tacks, all physical advantages may be vain; our strength may fail us to combat the violent, and our wit and wisdom to baffle the deceiver. Where then shall we turn for security? The text informs us—"*follow* "*that which is good*;" for, as one of the wisest men that ever was, or will be, has also observed, "*He that walketh uprightly walketh* "*surely.*" That both these maxims bear with them an authority that will easily gain them credit in the assembly I am addressing, I shall readily believe; yet, as it is for ever pleasing to see how consonant to the reason of things, all the moral maxims of our holy religion are, it may not be any waste of time to compare this divine aphorism, with the present situation, the hopes, and expectations of human nature. The words of my text, as read to you, both at the head of this discourse, and in the epistle of the day*, run thus: "*For* "*who is he that will harm you, if ye be fol-* "*lowers of that which is good?*" That is, who is it that will have an inclination or

* Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

desire

desire to injure you, if your conduct be inoffensive, and your manners unobjectionable? Now it is certain, that goodness, of its own nature, in the wise dispensations of Providence, tends to the gaining mens' affections, and making them our friends. This, indeed, is tacitly acknowledged by the very practices of hypocrisy itself, for the hypocrite would not be at so much pains to put on the appearance of virtue, if he did not know it was the most proper and effectual means of gaining the love and esteem of mankind. But, besides this, virtue is known to challenge open respect oftentimes, even from those who cannot bring themselves to obey its precepts; their reason and judgment yielding them, as it were, a passive service, while their active powers are clogged by distempered passions. Virtue, therefore, will not fail to convince their understandings, though it may not serve to work their reformation and amendment. How eminently was this exemplified, when the officers, sent by the Pharisees to apprehend our Saviour, could not forbear, in admiration

SERM. IV.

tion of his holy discourses, to declare, "*that he spake as never man spake.*" How was it exemplified in the case of the Roman governor who condemned him? who could not avoid asserting, at the moment he passed the sentence (though by so doing he convicted himself of the most horrid of all crimes), "*that he found no fault at all* "*in him.*" But, as more pointedly applicable to ourselves, how is it exemplified every day in the common concerns of life and dealings among men? when the wicked themselves shew an unwillingness and objection (as they often do), to place any confidence, except in such as are of acknowledged credit and probity in the world. If to these circumstances we add the known qualities and drift of virtue, that it tends to render a man, in every way, not only a worthy but a useful member of society, just and upright, and diligent in public life; humane, tender, and affectionate in private; never oppressing the weak, nor dealing hardly with those in his power, but willing to administer help to all that stand in need of it, we must

must naturally be induced to think it must serve to conciliate friends, and gain us the esteem and love of mankind, and if so, that few will have inclination to oppose or injure such men: for, "*Who is*" the wretch that would "*harm a follower*" or promoter "*of*" so much "*good?*" SERM. IV.

And thus much for the words of my text, as they stand in our translation. But their purport becomes widely extended when considered in another sense, and which they as fully admit of; for the original may with equal justice be rendered, "*And who is he that* shall *harm you, if ye* "*be followers of that which is good?*" By the first interpretation regard is had to the dispositions of men; that such is the necessary respect due to virtue, that it is likely always to have such an influence, as will deter the generality of men from all inclination to injure those that practise it. But, in this last interpretation, respect is had to the power and ability of man to hurt us (if we be but "*followers of that* "*which is good*"), should he be ever so much

SERM. IV. much inclined, or ever so powerful. For it is undeniable, that, spite of every consideration, such is the corruption of human nature, that the good often do suffer here below, and, for the purposes of God's unerring wisdom, the bad are for a time permitted to prevail. But lest these things should tend to stagger the faith of the good, or raise doubts and apprehensions in the breasts of the religious, special rewards are every where held out to those who suffer wrongfully; promises too sacred to be mistrusted are perpetually made to such, of happiness to come, not in any common measure, but proportionable to the sufferings they endure. Thus, particularly in the verses following my text, the Apostle adds, "*And if ye suffer for* "*righteousness sake, happy are ye, and be* "*not afraid, neither be troubled.*" "*But* "*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; for* "*it is better, if the will of God be so, that* "*ye suffer for well-doing than for evil doing.*" Not better certainly, except *through the will of God*, who can *compensate* such unworthy sufferings. There is no circumstance

stance that falls within the observation of man, that tends more to confirm the probability of a future ſtate, than the frequent prosperity of the wicked, and the temporary depreſſion of the good. The promises of the Gospel are so consistent with what we must be as much disposed to expect, as to hope for, and are so indisputably the promises of God himself, that the good man must naturally feel fortified against all present misfortunes, assured that, however wearied with the load of this life, however heavy laden with cares and anxiety here below, Heaven will in time be opened to him, and he will obtain rest and comfort. Though then "*an "host should encamp against him, his heart "will not fear.*" He will "*fight the good "fight, and be faithful unto death.*" He will, as far as in him lays, be in all things "*a "follower of that which is good,*" assured that then not many will be *inclined* to do him harm; but, and if some should, that none shall finally prevail; for, in the day of judgment, where the ſinners and the

SERM. IV. ungodly shall not be able to stand, he knows that he shall be doomed "*to dwell* "*in the tabernacle of the Lord, and to rest* "*upon his holy hill.*" According to the royal Psalmist's more extended account of "*the followers of that which is good;*" which as it serves admirably to enforce the precept of the text, and to guard against mistakes in its interpretation, I shall state more at large, "*Lord, who shall dwell in* "*thy tabernacle, and who shall rest upon thy* "*holy hill?*" (Who is he, O blessed Lord, that after the struggles of this mortal life, shall be admitted to the glory of thy presence, and the everlasting happiness of thy heavenly kingdom.) "*Even he that* "*leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the* "*thing which is right, and speaketh the truth* "*from his heart. He that hath used no de-* "*ceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neigh-* "*bour, and hath not slandered his neighbour.* "*He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly* "*in his own eyes; and maketh much of them* "*that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to* "*his neighbour and disappointeth him not,* "*though*

" *though it were to his own hinderance. Whoso* SERM.
" *doeth these things shall never fall*.*" IV.

And thus are we assured, by the reason and fitness of things, and by the exhortations of Scripture, and upon the authority of holy men inspired by God, and above all on the promises of God himself, that to follow that which is good, is indusputably the most certain and infallible means of guarding ourselves against the malevolence of our enemies here below; and that if they should, by the providence of God, be even suffered to prevail in this life, that then it is the *only* means in our power of finally triumphing hereafter. Nay, not only of triumphing, by being removed far from their reach, released from the violence of their animosity, and secured from the shafts of their malice and enmity, but, instead of having really harmed us here below, we shall find their hatred turn out to our advantage; for if with patience, and true Christian fortitude, and becoming submission to the will

* Psalm xv.

SERM. IV. of God, we shall have borne without murmuring such unjust persecutions, we shall receive, at the hand of God, so much more abundant a weight of glory. This is also promised to us by God himself! A promise equally consistent with what the nature of things would point out to our hopes and expectations. For, besides that it must be among the purposes of eternal goodness, and eternal justice, to prepare for those that suffer unworthily here ample compensation in another world, it will surely naturally operate to increase our happiness, and render it far more sensible to us, it being a release from all the troubles of this uncertain state: a release, not temporary, but final; not precarious, or leaving us open to fresh attacks, but eternal and complete; where every wound, received in this our warfare of mortal life, will be closed and healed for ever! Let us then but cast back our thoughts to the various afflictions we have hitherto undergone; to the pains of body, and anxieties of mind; to the sorrows we have endured, and the struggles we have sustained; and

let us contrast them with the comforts we have felt, whenever the merciful hand of God has at any time relieved us from these sad and bitter strokes. Let us remember how sweet have been the moments of consolation and comfort, after any heavy affliction; the moments of ease, after tormenting pain; the sunshine of joy and cheerfulness, after the gloom of sorrow, and the tears of woe. If, after these reflections, we sum up all the troubles of this short life, and then cast our views forward, to the endless ages before us of peace and comfort; from these scenes of chance and change, to those eternal realms above, where affliction shall never enter, where there shall be neither sorrow, nor pain, nor death; surely it must serve not only to reconcile us to all the transitory pains of this passing scene, but to convince our reason, that it is truly him "*whom the* "*Lord loveth,*" that "*he chasteneth.*" That afflictions are sent us not only to exercise us in those transcendent virtues, faith, hope, and resignation, but that they are by the merciful wisdom of Providence at the

SERM. IV. the same time so ordered, as eminently to heighten the good man's enjoyment of the peace and serenity of the realms above.

By a life of piety and true holiness then, let us ever seek to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Then need we never "*fear what man can do unto us.*" If not delivered from our afflictions here below, we may rest assured they will be abundantly compensated in the life which is to come; "*all things being appointed finally to* "*work together for good*" to them, who trust in the mercies, the providence, and the goodness of God.

SERMON

SERMON V.

ON THE SABBATH.*

NEHEMIAH XIII. 17.

Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day?

THE verses immediately preceding this inform us more particularly of the very nature of the offences, committed in profanation of the sabbath-day, in Judah and Jerusalem, which the nobles or magistracy encouraged or connived at:—" V. 15. *In* " *those days saw I in Judah some treading* " *wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing* " *in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine-* " *grapes, and figs, and all manner of bur-* " *dens, which they brought into Jerusalem,* " *on the sabbath-day: and I testified against* " *them in the day wherein they sold victuals.*

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* Preached at Brighthelmstone.

" *There*

SERM. V. "*There dwelt men of Tyre also therein,* "*which brought fish and all manner of ware,* "*and sold on the sabbath unto the children* "*of Judah and in Jerusalem.*" But it is not of so much moment, that we sholud ascertain exactly, *how* the sabbath was profaned, the crime itself, and the consequences, are what most concern ourselves. The crime was heinous and great, and according to the method of God's dispensations in those days, drew down upon those that were guilty of it, great and almost immediate punishment. "V. 18. *Did not* "*our fathers thus, and did not our God bring* "*all this evil upon us, and upon this city?*" The sabbath-day is a day *we* continue to distinguish from other days, but whether by hallowing it as we should do, or profaning it as they did in Judah and Jerusalem, deserves some consideration. Let the original institution of the sabbath be referred to whatever cause it may, Reason must approve the two most conspicuous uses of it; of rest from labour, and opportunity for our devotions. It would be impossible to prove, perhaps, that the exact quantity

quantity of rest, which the human frame stands in need of, is such as is secured by the appointment of the sabbath; but, as to the other point, we may be certain, that one day out of seven is not too much to devote to the especial service of our Creator, "*in whom we live, and move, and have "our being.*" Possibly, had God never instituted and appointed a particular day of rest, men would have found one for themselves; but I doubt whether this would ever have been done with any sort of equity or impartiality; each individual would have favoured himself. Those able to command an interval of rest, would have taken it; but the man-servant and maid-servant, the cattle, and the stranger, probably would have been little attended to. Not so with the day of God's own appointment; no individual is favoured by his decrees; in him, the very ox that treadeth out the corn findeth a friend; much more all of the human race, who by his especial will and providence are placed at present in a state of relative dependence; and, independent of all other testimony,

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timony, this seems to me to amount to internal evidence enough of the divine origin of the institution. The command is full of that general and comprehensive beneficence, which can alone be referred to the God and Father of us all. For too true it is, that if we look around us but ever so little, we shall soon see, that even now that it is so clearly promulgated, few men are capable of acting up to the true spirit of it. Did not the laws of the state interpose to enforce the observance of the command, however men might be inclined to take rest themselves, there is no saying how little would be granted to those dependent on them; and, as it is, how sadly, in very many instances, is its merciful design departed from! In cases of extreme emergency, we have an excuse to plead; we have a right to argue, as our Lord himself taught us, that "*the sabbath was made for* "*man, and not man for the sabbath.*" But let us beware how we judge of these emergencies; they will be found upon due consideration to be very few. It is lawful to do good on the sabbath-day, to almost any

any extent, but to do any thing less, at the expence either of our own rest, or that of others, is grossly inexcusable. In our own case it is a neglect of God's command, in the case of others it can be nothing less, but heightened indeed besides by the heavy aggravation of infringing a right which God himself had designed, by especial interposition, to secure to all alike. What can we say then in defence of those, what can they say in defence of themselves, who pay no regard, in this respect, to the Rest of those dependent on them? Let the laws of the state, or the customs of society, or even the voluntary obedience of those subservient to us, encourage us as they may to infringe the commandment upon common occasions, we have really no right whatever to do it. We are enjoined to rest ourselves, not for the purposes of idle and dissipated relaxation, but for the purpose of our more free and undisturbed devotions; and for the same indispensable ends are we bound to afford to others the same opportunities: but of those that administer to our service, and

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SERM. V. our pleasure, if some are capable of a voluntary surrender of their freedom, others are not so. In the case of our cattle it is unqualified compulsion, and we may well think it cannot be otherwise than peculiarly atrocious in the sight of God, for, because they have no faculty of remonstrating for themselves, God himself has condescended to be their advocate, and commanded *us* to grant, what *they* have no power to ask at our hands. It would be vain to attempt any distinct enumeration of such exigencies as may justify our unreserved employment of our servants and cattle on the sabbath-day; but of this we may be very sure, that all unnecessary interruption of the devotions of the one, as well as all unnecessary abridgment of the comforts of the other, must amount to a gross violation of the law; but if, in addition to this, we so abuse them to answer any unholy purposes, we must needs think so aggravated an affront must call down upon us the just vengeance of an offended Deity. But though these are considerations that seem so obviously to arise from

from a mere perusal of the commandment, yet many there are who act as if they never occurred to them. Not content with the abuse of those immediately dependent on them, many, for instance, by wanton and unnecessary journeys in particular, invade most unfeelingly the rights of others, with whom they cannot possibly pretend to have any other connection, than what accidentally arises out of the occasion, an occasion always of their own seeking. Duly considered, I scarcely think a more foul profanation of the sabbath can be devised than this very one that I am alluding to, for such travelling itself is seldom conducted now without great abuses, and most gross violations, both of morality and humanity. And is the Lord's-day, as in too many instances undoubtedly it happens, to be particularly selected for such purposes? Indeed, those who so abuse it cannot be acquitted of a most aggravated offence against Almighty God, and, in addition to their own foul infringement of his laws, must needs be responsible for the many heinous and great abuses consequent thereto. Much

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more

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more might be said upon the subject of the sabbatical rest enjoined by the fourth commandment, but, having made an allusion to one of the most glaring abuses of it, I would now rather confine myself to the consideration of the other duty enjoined us, of "*keeping the sabbath holy.*" "*Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.*" If we could bring ourselves to conform to this part of the commandment, we need not be afraid of infringing the other. For, in this case, both our thoughts and actions would take a different direction: by seeking rest and retirement for our own private devotions and meditations, we should avoid all intrusion on the rest and retirement on others. And this is surely what we ought to do, if we have any proper sense of our own infirmities. The Lord's-day should be (if I may use such an expression) a day of account between God and us. We should eagerly embrace the opportunity of examining into the state of our souls, that we may pray for the support we want, and atone by contrition and repentance for the sins we have committed.

We

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We should, in every possible way, endeavour to do honor to the day of the Lord, by acts of charity, as well as of piety and devotion. We should studiously refrain from evil in our own persons, and discountenance it, to the best of our power, in others. We should punctually attend the appointed services in God's holy temple; as much, perhaps, for an example to others, as for our own private advantage and edification; not to be "*seen of men*," out of ostentation, but that others, "*seeing our good works*," may learn "*to glorify*," as they should do, their "*Father which is in Heaven*."

It is to be feared, few keep the sabbath-day holy in the way I have thus described. Self-examination and self-abasement are exercises of the soul, very seldom attended to in these days. It is almost as much as we can expect, if a few hours shall be given up to the public worship of God. The rest of the day is thought to be our own; not for any purposes of meditation and reflection, but for an unreserved intercourse with the rest of the world; unreserved

SERM. V. reserved I call it, for it is too often without any distinction at all; not in the society of our friends and relatives, but more probably among those least known to us; where the gay and the profligate, the dissolute and abandoned, make their public resort. This is too notoriously the case, wherever opportunity offers; and so habituated is the generality of the world to this mode of flying from all sober thought and reflection, that these opportunities have been purposely multiplied, till scarcely a private place is left for those of a retired disposition. In the mean while, the examples of dissipation in high life are imitated by the lower ranks, in scenes of riot and intemperance, lewdness and profaneness. Few do, in fact, give rest either to their souls or bodies; but much, if not most, of the day is spent in scenes of confusion and distraction, turbulence and noise. But it will be retorted, I know, with eagerness,—Is then the day of the Lord to be a day of *gloom?* Is it to be a day of *labour* and *sorrow?* I answer *yes,* of *all* if necessary, but of *none without necessity.*

necessity. Of gloom, if our sins and iniquities preceding have been so enormous and inexcusable, that we may justly fear to approach the presence of our Maker. Of labour, if we have made no efforts previously, as we should have done, to work out our own salvation. This must be done some time, and never suitably without "*great fear and trembling;*" arising from a due and proper sense of our own manifold infirmities, and God's supreme perfections. And a day of sorrow, too, ought it to be, as far as we have sins to be ashamed of, and the forfeited favor of our blessed Saviour to recover by repentance. But never need it be a day of gloom, or of much labour or sorrow, to the upright and religious man. Pleased to come into the presence of his God, *he* approaches his temple, with songs of praise, and hymns of joy. With true and sincere repentance, *he* makes confession of his sins, and glories in being set free from the weight and burthen of them. The hours *he* devotes to retirement are not passed in any way gloomy to himself, however it may be

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thought otherwise by the unfeeling and inconsiderate. For, to a mind of a sober and rational turn, meditation on the word of God, or contemplation of his works, are equally productive of the most glorious hopes and most exalted pleasures; hopes and pleasures, founded on a rock, which will not fade and perish, even when the globe which we inhabit shall be broken up and dissolved. These pursuits being thought gloomy by the gay and dissipated, does not make them so. To those who have more reason to be alarmed at the threats, than encouraged by the hopes, of the Gospel, it may be gloomy to turn to the word of God. But the gloom is in their own minds:— "*For wickedness, condemned by her own* "*witness, is very timorous; and, being* "*pressed with conscience, always forecasteth* "*grievous things**." It is to be feared, without speaking too harshly, that it is only their folly and want of consideration that can make them think themselves *gay* and *happy:* for those capable of sober

* Wisdom xvii. 11.

thought

thought and retired meditation are the truly happy; those whom the study of the word of God has raised above the frivolous amusements and distracting cares of this mortal life. We may judge of the satisfaction accruing to an upright man from the study of God's word, by the value put upon it by the wise King of Israel, if the *Book* of *Wisdom* may be any how referred to him. He knew the worth of worldly things also, for with them he particularly compares the delight arising from religious knowledge. "*I preferred her before* "*sceptres and thrones, and esteemed riches* "*nothing in comparison of her: neither com-* "*pared I unto her any precious stone; be-* "*cause all gold, in respect of her, is as a* "*little sand, and silver shall be counted as* "*clay before her. I loved her above health* "*and beauty, and chose to have her instead of* "*light. For the light that cometh from her* "*never goeth out. All good things together* "*came to me with her, and innumerable riches* "*in her hands. And I rejoiced in them all,* "*because wisdom goeth before them, and I* "*knew not that she was the mother of them.*"

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SERM. V. He knew not till he tried; and the event would be the same, if we could provoke others to the same trial. Religious meditation is not necessarily gloomy: how should it be so? Is it not true, what the Apostle asserts, that "*godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*" Gaiety and dissipation have no such advantages. They can interest only for a very short portion of the life that now is; of that which is to come, they can give us no assurance. Yet one is but a vapour, so soon passeth it away, and it is gone; the other will endure for ever. The one has few pleasures unmixed with pain; the other may abound in pleasures for evermore, as free from sorrow as from death. I shall say nothing of the contemplation of God's works, another suitable employment for the Lord's day; because this must depend, in some degree, upon taste, and, in some degree, upon capacity; and those are as much to be pitied as censured, who are indisposed to study the mighty works of God. His word it is

our

our indispensable duty to search into, and meditate upon: his works, no further, unless particularly led thereto, than to know that they are his, and that in wisdom he has made them all. But the Lord's day may be properly hallowed and sanctified, though much of it is given up to social intercourse. Provided our duty to God is not neglected, or postponed improperly, we cannot perhaps hallow the Lord's day more worthily, than by manifesting our love towards our neighbour, by indulging in all those charities of social life, which the several relations in which we stand to our fellow-creatures point out. But it is melancholy to think how times are altered in this respect: formerly, every man was best pleased to pass the sabbath in the bosom of his own family; it was a day that peculiarly brought together those whom business had separated during the other six: now, pleasure commonly separates us upon the sabbath, as much as business has done on the preceding days. We try to spend our hours of relaxation in crowds and mixed assemblies. Private society is thought dull and heavy;

SERM. V. heavy; and we seem as much afraid of being confined to our own houses, or our families, as to our own private thoughts in solitude and retirement. This may afford amusement, but certainly at the expence of much solid comfort and rational delight. The sabbath is grievously profaned when God is shut out from all our thoughts. It is the Lord's day; he hath sanctified it; he has commanded us to "*remember to keep it holy*," that is, the *whole* day, not *two hours of it only*, two hours of, perhaps at the best, very imperfect devotions; confession of sins, with but small sorrow and contrition; prayers for help, with little of humility and less of implicit confidence in God; praises, cold and careless, quite destitute of that ardent gratitude which we ought to feel for the smallest favors bestowed on us by God; an unprofitable hearing of his word, leading to no repentance for past sins, or amendment of our lives in future. I fear this is but too just a picture of our public devotions. As to private, I apprehend they are almost quite laid aside; private prayer, and private meditation; and, as to

acts

acts of charity and benevolence, which ought to occupy all that is not given to the worship of God, it is to be feared, there is but little of true benevolence to be found in large and promiscuous meetings; much more, it is to be apprehended, of vanity, as to what regards ourselves, and of envy and malevolence towards others. Turn to the Apostles' account of true Christian charity, such as ought ever to be the ruling principle of those who would be thought holy in the sight of God, and ask yourselves, what share it is likely to have in the public assemblies, either of the rich or poor. First, *that charity* is "*kind,*" "*envieth not,*" "*vaunteth not itself,*" "*is not puffed up,*" "*doth not behave itself unseemly,*" "*seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil,*" (a rare virtue indeed). Again, it "*rejoiceth not,*" that is, has no pleasure "*in iniquity,*" but "*rejoiceth in the truth,*" "*beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*" But it is time to come to a close:—notorious acts of profanation every man can detect; SERM. V.

SERM. V. detect; though, it is to be feared, few regard them with the horror and disgust they should do; but besides these, there ought to be a spirit of holiness run through all our actions on that day, which of late seems to be entirely abandoned. If we think at all of God, we quite forget ourselves, and little regard the real good of our neighbours. Some of the day should be exclusively given up to God, in acts of fervent and sincere devotion; some should be carefully appropriated to private meditation, self-examination, and, if it need be, mortification and repentance; and the rest should be devoted to acts of real charity and true genuine benevolence. This is not making the Lord's day a day of pain and gloominess, except to those who cannot relish the most exalted gratifications of which the heart is capable. Let them amend and correct their hearts; at present they are disgustingly degraded below their native dignity. Given up to mammon, the human heart is a sink of corruption; devoted to God, it is the source of every thing amiable and good; and, if the

the heart cannot be corrected without some pangs of repentance and stings of remorse; yet, if it is not corrected in time, sorrow without end, and pain without mitigation, are before us. Be sober and considerate, before it is too late. If it appears unpleasant, it is at least wise: if, in short, we are told, "*the hearts of the "wise"* must sometimes be "*in the house "of mourning,*" it is only "*the hearts of "fools*" that would always be "*in the "house of mirth**."

SERM. V.

* Eccles. vii. 4.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

CATECHISM.

PROVERBS XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

THERE is something so strikingly comprehensive in this beautiful adage, that it would seem impossible but that the mind of man muſt be forcibly impressed by it. It is not applicable to any one distinct branch of our moral conduct only, or to any particular period or season of our earthly existence; but to the whole circle of our religious and social duties, and to the whole compass (from the dawn and morning to the evening and last close) of human life. "*Train up a child,*" that innocent and interesting, but helpless being, just entering on the course of an uncertain journey, for which he is himself incapable of making a provision; but which will be strewed with flowers, or beset with thorns,

as

SERM. VI. as those on whose care he is to depend shall set him forward on his way. Without all doubt, there is not wanting among us sufficient knowledge and experience of the snares and temptations to which the ignorant and uninstructed are exposed, to do away all doubts relative to the necessity of training up a child in the way he should go; neither, I would hope, generally speaking, is there any deficiency of feeling or sentiment, with regard to this important call upon us, that should render the task of recommending it difficult or ungrateful. The text certainly sets before us the strongest motive that can be suggested on the occasion: the care incumbent on us is not that of merely providing for the day that is passing over, or of supplying aid while the helplessness of infancy or imbecility of childhood call for it; but the future scenes of manhood and old age are concerned in the charge: it belongs to us (while their tender minds may be moulded and fashioned to any good principles whatsoever) to secure to them the best chance of becoming good men

men hereafter; and of descending, with respect and the veneration of their fellow-creatures, and full of good hope of everlasting life to come, to the grave of death at the last. "*Train up a child in the way* "*he should go,*" not merely because he is now feeble and tottering, and incapable of distinguishing the path of life; but because on such care depends consequences the most remote and important, "*when* "*he is old he will not depart from it.*" SERM. VI.

The season being come, in which it is the custom of this place* (founded on the canons of the church, and the laws of the land) publicly to catechise the children of the respective parishes, it may not be amiss, to bestow some consideration on that particular branch of religious instruction; and I therefore purpose to make it the subject of my present discourse: in doing which, I shall avoid entering into any methodical explication of the several articles of our public form; both because the time would not well admit of so large a dis-

* Preached at St. Peter's, Oxford, 1796.

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SERM. VI. cussion of the subject, and because adequate explanations are already spread abroad among us; and, by the bounty and benevolence of well-disposed Christians, have been very recently put in a way of more general circulation than I believe to have been the case in any former period: I am, on these accounts, therefore, inclined to confine myself more immediately to some general observations, at once applicable, both to the custom of catechising children, and the form itself, which the wisdom of the church has provided.

If we look into the royal injunctions, by which the ministry of the Church of England were first called to this office of catechising the children of their respective parishes; and, if we examine the canons and laws by which they are still held to be governed in this respect, we may be led to suspect, that they are become remiss in this great branch of their duty, and do not now sufficiently act up to the spirit of these laws, either in enforcing the attendance of the uninstructed, or in ex-

expounding the Catechism; but it should be recollected, that, since the passing of these acts, and the promulgation of these first injunctions, the change of circumstances is considerable: books then were few, and literate persons fewer; almost all knowledge was confined to the clergy; and, without such opportunities of public instruction, the ignorance and darkness which Popery made its advantage of might have remained for ever; for, in private houses, there were few religious books written in our native tongue, and the number of those capable of reading them proportionably small; but, happily, now the case is otherwise: religious knowledge is amply laid open to all; children may be taught under the eyes of their parents; and those few who continue incompetent, through ignorance or poverty, to bestow this inestimable boon of parental care on their offspring, may find a door opened to them, by the bounty and goodness of the better-endowed and better-informed. I would not be thought to be pleading the cause of the negligent among us, much less of discommending those who continue

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SERM. VI. to bestow such attention on this branch of their duty as these early laws seem to require; but I thought it not altogether improper, to make these cursory observations on the change of outward circumstances.

I now proceed to such general observations as I wish to make, on the utility of catechising children, and especially according to the public form provided by the church. There is one objection often made against our Church Catechism, which it certainly is impossible entirely to do away, namely, that it contains many things above the comprehension of children. It must certainly be granted that it does so; but this need not lessen its effect ultimately: the purpose is, to pre-occupy the mind with good principles, before bad ones can have any hold of them; and they must be dealt with, therefore, even perhaps before the very moment is come in which they are strictly capable of comprehending any truths whatsoever: when such important matters may be able to make any impression at all, it may be morally impossible to

calculate, but as the first opening of the human mind exposes it to receive equally ideas of good or evil, it cannot be too early engaged on the side of Religion; and the mere words that represent the ideas they are afterwards to come to an apprehension of, will be silently and secretly clearing the way for the comprehension of the great truths themselves. I am not taking refuge behind an argument, applicable only to religious instruction, in which the church might be supposed to have its hidden purposes, in speaking a language not universally to be understood, but I may fairly refer to another branch of knowledge, in which a similar course is pursued. Those who have attained to the highest pitch of profane literature, will still acknowledge, that the earliest books of instruction put into their hands, were least to be comprehended, and remain still the most difficult to be fully expounded, yet they cannot be brought to deny, but that their after-attainments were owing to these foundations; and, though they cannot analyse the impressions made, or fix the

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SERM. VI. date of the first rays of light, that darted in on their minds, they must still confess, that the grammatical rudiments they were taught, did serve as sure steps to the attainment of their after-knowledge, and did secretly and silently operate as means of wholesome instruction. It may be so with the more abstruse parts of the Church Catechism; they are so founded on truth, as to be incapable of making *bad* impressions, and they may silently operate to lead the mind up to higher and more important matters. It is well too, even thus to pre-engage the *curiosity* of children; as their faculties expand, and their understandings become enlightened, they will naturally seek to comprehend what they may heretofore have only uttered by rote; and then, what a fund of essential knowledge is provided for them! a perfect summary of Christianity, of the laws of God, and the duties of man; with such intimation of the mysteries, and such explanation of the two sacraments, as may serve to render them becoming members of the church of Christ. But, in thus meeting the objection

objection thrown out against our Church Catechism as being incomprehensible, I by no means yield to it so far as to grant that the Catechism is in general beyond the faculties of children. It contains very much, capable of impressing the human mind, at the very earliest dawn of sense and reflection, and of interesting and engaging it on the side of Virtue and Religion. From the very beginning of the Catechism, a child may soon be brought to understand, that the earliest and chiefest care of its parents, were not confined to the provision of bodily conveniences, but to dedicate his person to God Almighty, and to pray that he might, hereafter, have grace and goodness enough "*to keep God's* "*holy will and commandments, and walk in* "*the same all the days of his life.*" The commandments themselves that follow, from the twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus, are equally capable of making an early impression, and instead of being too profound for the mind of a child, are in truth but a simplification of what would otherwise be unintelligible. It cannot be denied, but

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SERM. VI. that the simplicity of the eighth commandment, "*Thou shalt not steal,*" is more capable of impressing the mind of a child with the just principles of honest dealings, than any long discussion on the nature and distinctions of possession and property*. The Lord's Prayer, no doubt, very early indeed begins to make an impression: the

* In the month of December, 1799, the celebrated M. de Luc, reader to her Majesty, published at Berlin, in French, a series of letters upon the very subject before us, in which are to be found many very able arguments, to shew the exceeding great propriety and reasonableness of instructing infants in the first principles of religion. Some of which absolutely require to be taught as facts, being incapable of positive and direct proof; such, for instance, as the Being and attributes of God; the creation of the world, &c.—He is for making religion a concern of the heart rather than of the head; and in this he is undoubtedly right: for, to apply the words of another admirable writer, "The judgment and understanding have "their proper method, which is by principles and de-"monstrations. The heart and affections have a method "altogether different. A man would expose himself "very remarkably, who should go about to engage our "love, by laying down, in a philosophical order, the "springs and causes of that passion."

Pensées de Pascal, xxxi. 31.

child

child can soon distinguish, in some degree, between his earthly parents and the Father of All, "*which is in Heaven,*" whose name he is taught to hallow; that Father, who is actually, and in reality, to give him his "*daily bread,*" and send him (by the effects of his merciful providence) "*all things* "*that be needful both for his soul and body.*" But of all parts of the Catechism, capable of making an early impression on the minds of children, I think none can be more likely to do so, than the two admirable summaries of our duty to *God,* and our duty to our *neighbour*. I can scarcely conceive it possible for a child to mistake the meaning of the terms adopted in the former. It is, beyond all explanation, most full and comprehensive, and yet simple to admiration: "*My duty towards God,*" says the innocent and unoffending child, not yet corrupted by evil principles, "*is to believe in him, to fear* "*him, and to love him, with all my heart, with* "*all my mind, and with all my soul, and with* "*all my strength—to worship him—to give* "*him thanks—to honour his holy name and his* "*word—and to serve him truly all the days* "*of* SERM. VI.

SERM. VI. "*of my life.*" Is it possible to think this does not sink deep into the mind of a child? Again, how soon must he be capable of understanding, also, the chief points of his duty to his neighbour, as set forth under the several relations and distinctions which civil society has given rise to; first, generally, he is "*to love all men* "*as himself, and to do to all men as he* "*would they should do to him,*" under any supposed or real exchange, that is, of circumstances and situation. Then, for the several relations of civil life, "*his father* "*and mother*" he is to "*love, honour, and* "*succour*; *the king, and all that are put in* "*authority under him* (to execute the established laws of the land), *he is to reverence* "*and obey.*" In order to profit by their care and services, he is to "*submit himself* "*to all his governors, teachers, spiritual pas-* "*tors, and masters*;" and because there must ever be inequalities in the outward estates and conditions of men, for the peace and harmony of society, he should learn to "*order himself lowly and reverently* "*to all his betters*; *to hurt nobody in word*

" *or deed; to be true and just in all his deal-* SERM.
" *ings; to bear no malice nor hatred in his* VI.
" *heart; to keep his hands from picking and*
" *stealing, and his tongue from evil speaking,*
" *lying, and slandering; to keep his body in*
" *temperance, soberness, and chastity; not to*
" *covet or desire other mens' goods, but to*
" *learn and labour truly to get his own living,*
" *and to do his duty in that state of life into*
" *which it shall please God to call him.*" It may seem unnecessary to have repeated these articles thus at length in this assembly, but I must be allowed to deem it otherwise, if, in setting them before you in a new point of view, as compositions of the most consummate simplicity, I obtain for it any additional regard and attention. I think we shall not bear, now, to hear it said our Church Catechism is ill-calculated for children, when it has provided such a foundation for every duty, religious and moral; when it stands forth thus, to preoccupy and engage the tender minds of infants, before the evil lessons of the corrupt and abandoned shall have made their

SERM. VI. their way to them; to fortify, arm, and strengthen them, before the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, shall have been at liberty to begin their attacks. What a prospect does it unfold to us in the course and progress of the life of a fellow creature, when we have not only the scriptural encouragement of the text to stimulate us, but when the philosophy of the human mind steps in to enforce the observation, and tells us, it is an almost infallible consequence, that a child trained up in the path of Christian rectitude, will scarcely ever, in the natural course of events, be inclined or able, when he is old, to depart from it? Habit is truly a second nature, not easily abandoned and set aside. If we have any doubt of it, in regard to a good disposition, and a good education, surely we must grant it in the case of a bad one. How incorrigible are the wicked; how just the inference of the Prophet, "*Can* "*the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard* "*his spots? Then may ye also do good who* "*are accustomed to do evil.*" Good habits ought

ought to be still stronger, as founded upon principles so satisfactory to the mind of man. SERM. VI.

I shall conclude these general remarks on our Church Catechism, which I have laid before you this day, as applicable to the season, with the eloquent but just encomium of a very learned writer of our own times:

" Morality has, by some writers, been " investigated with metaphysical subtlety, " and explained with logical precision. By " others it has been decorated with all the " rich and glowing colours of eloquent de- " clamation, and poetical imagery. But, " (with an exception to those writings *only*, " which proceeded immediately from the " Spirit of God) I have not seen the moral " relations of mankind, and the obliga- " tions resulting from them, stated with " so much compression in the matter, so " much order in the arrangement, or so " much luminousness and energy in the " style, as in the Catechism of our Church.

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"The account which is there given of "our duty toward God and our neigh- "bour, is adapted to all ranks, and to all "ages. The philosopher, when he peruses "it, pauses with admiration, and the re- "ligionist is enraptured with piety. The "young should be encouraged to learn it "with the most serious attention, and "happy is it for the man of hoary hairs, "if he continues to read it with growing "conviction, growing delight, and grow- "ing improvement."—*Parr.*

SERMON

SERMON VII.

ON EXAMPLE.

PROVERBS XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

IT is melancholy to think how old this precept is, and yet how far the world is from having benefited by it so much as it might. Had it been the general care of men, from the first ages of the world, to have set their children forward in the way they ought to go, then we might naturally have looked for something approaching to perfection, even among human creatures. But yet, not if this had been left to mere hazard, for though experience, perhaps, might have convinced them of their own errors, it might not have taught them a perfect rule of right; so that, in order to breed

SERM. VII. breed up a rising generation, in such a manner as to secure them entirely from the seductions of sin, and the delusions of folly and vanity, it must be necessary to have some standard to refer to, by which we may, without doubt or difficulty, entirely regulate their actions. But, in regard to *us*, this is the case; *we* have, in *the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, confirmed by the inward suggestions of the conscience, a most infallible rule of right always to refer to, and by which, we are compelled, more perhaps than we are willing to confess, always to judge of *our own* proceedings. We cannot deny, that we know always what is morally right and morally wrong, in the manners and dealings of mankind; and though such knowledge may not avail so far as to amend our lives, yet that we and others do transgress and deviate from the paths of virtue, is sufficiently clear to us. Let us then consider, within ourselves, how exceedingly blameworthy we must be, if, both knowing that we are doing wrong, and knowing at the same time what would be right, we suffer the rising generation to

to be misled by our examples, and, for want of advice and instruction, to wander from the paths of virtue and holiness? And yet, if we give way to any evil habits whatsoever, we cannot but render ourselves responsible for the effects they may have with regard to society at large. SERM. VII.

From the same words which I am now discoursing upon, I took occasion, last time I addressed you from hence, to enforce, as a matter of exceeding great propriety and importance, the duty of instructing the rising generation in the Public Catechism of the church; but there is evidently another mode of instruction, fully as much incumbent on us, namely, that of *example*; and upon this head, more particularly, I purpose to enlarge at present. There are none who live so entirely secluded, but that their manners and ways of living will attract some notice; and it is one of the most common weaknesses of our nature, to think ourselves at liberty to do, what others have done before us. The wicked and sinful man, therefore, has very much more

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more to answer for than the mere weight of his own transgressions; his example is always dangerous to his fellow creatures; and, as a murderer is naturally expelled society, because no man's person is safe while he ranges at large, so one of sinful and wicked habits, should be much more shunned and avoided, for fear that he might contaminate the soul, that more noble part of man. But young persons and children are those who are always most in danger from the contagion of bad examples; nature having given them minds peculiarly susceptible of lasting impressions, they can scarcely ever resist the contagion of bad examples; and as they become thus, therefore, as it were, innocent victims, the guilt of their misdoings must rest with those whose evil courses have blinded and misguided them. Let us look around us then, and reflect seriously upon the importance of our actions; how far our own welfare is affected by them is but one thing, we ought also deeply to weigh in our minds how they may affect the peace and happiness of others.

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others. In all societies, large or small, there is ever a certain proportion of our fellow creatures not yet arrived at the age of judgment and discretion: now these are, to those more advanced in life, blind and helpless beings, setting forth on a journey full of snares, and dangers, and difficulties, but which, by care, might be rendered safe, pleasant, and profitable to them; if they miss their way, destruction is before them; but, if they fall into the right track at first, the end and termination of their journeying will be peace and joy. And shall we not stretch out a hand to help these unprotected and uninstructed wanderers? I know we shall be tempted to answer in the affirmative; but let us beware lest we deceive ourselves in making any false professions. The common way of providing for children, now-a-days, is (besides that of giving them food and raiment), the procuring them to be instructed in reading and writing, the apprenticing them to some business, and so forth; among the higher classes they are taught besides many things, which, in the eye of reason,

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SERM. VII. and comparatively with the more essential duties of life, can only appear frivolous accomplishments. I have now set before you what is commonly done by way of providing, as it is called, for the rising generation. It will be well, therefore, to consider also what is too usually left undone; and this may all be resolved, perhaps, into that one great neglect of not attending, as we ought to do, to the examples we set before them. The text tells us, that the surest way to make good men, is to train up children in the way they ought to go, nature having provided for the efficacy of this measure, by giving them a peculiar aptness to learn at that age, and to retain impressions; how much then shall we have to answer for, if, instead of so training them up in the right way, we, by our discourses and our actions, lead them expressly into the paths of sin and wickedness? In the book of Deuteronomy, we have a very remarkable enumeration of particular curses denounced, by God, against several specific instances of great and extraordinary wickedness: to each of which the people are enjoined

enjoined to say, "*Amen*," not as wishing or desiring such curses may fall on their fellow creatures, however sinful, but by way of acknowledging, that wickedness, so atrocious, must most reasonably be expected to draw down on it the wrath and vengeance of God; now, among these curses there is one to the following effect— "*Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wan-* "*der out of the way; and all the people shall* "*say amen.*" I have already shewn, that with respect to the future dangers and difficulties of life, children are *blind* and *helpless*. I have shewn, that, from the constitution of their minds, they are in their tender years peculiarly apt to be led by examples. It is easy, therefore, to draw the inference, that if we do mislead young persons and children, by setting them bad examples, we, without any figure of speech, do unquestionably "*make the blind to wan-* "*der out of the way*;" and, for so barbarous a conduct must deserve the wrath and anger of God. In keeping such a check upon our conduct as may serve to lead the younger members of the society we

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SERM. VII. belong to, in the way they should go, our several duties may be ranged under three heads; namely, those that relate to religion, to justice, and common honesty, and to temperance or the government of our passions; on each of which heads, I shall have some short remarks to make. As to religion, if we neglect the public worship of God, or if, though we neglect it not, we live in private, contrary to what we profess in public, then children must learn from us to make a mockery of religion also, and immediately the door is opened for the entrance and admission of all manner of sin and wickedness. But surely we must confess that we make a mockery of religion, when pretending to acknowledge God to be the Lord of all the world, we yet openly and wilfully transgress his laws, blaspheme his name, and slight his authority. I shall mention three familiar instances of such mockery of God, for which no doubt we shall be called to strict account hereafter. All his laws are comprehended under these two heads, that we love God with all our hearts, and minds, and souls, and

and our neighbour as ourselves. But when our children see us so wrapped up in our worldly possessions, as to postpone the duties of religion for the most common concerns of life, and, instead of loving our neighbours as ourselves, seeking to compass our own good, by circumventing and defrauding all we may have to do with, how can they learn from this, to fulfil either of those most comprehensive laws? Again, how can they learn to reverence God's name, if they hear those that are older, and more experienced than themselves, uttering the most horrid oaths and imprecations upon the most trifling and unworthy occasions? How can they learn to revere his majesty and authority, if they see those who have deliberately entered into covenant with their Maker, openly and shamefully flying from their vows? By our baptismal vows, we are all bound to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; not that, in regard to the two former, we are expected to renounce the world so far as to forego the necessary labours and occupations of life, or the flesh so far as to give up the inno-

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cent and moderate indulgence of our natural appetites and desires, but we are never to suffer either the affairs of the world, or the gratification of fleshly appetites, to draw us aside from the paths of virtue and sobriety. Besides our baptismal vows, there is another vow by which both sexes, according to the ordinances of all civilized states, and the laws of God besides, most deliberately bind themselves in covenant with their Maker; I speak of the marriage vow. By this the mighty God is called to witness the most solemn promises of faith and fidelity that can be uttered by his creatures; promises, of such a nature, so sanctified by his especial presence, so fenced round with all that honor, friendship, and common honesty can add of security, that it is horrible to reflect on such corruption and depravity, as can tempt any to violate them; the crime itself is attended besides with such an example of abandoned principles, that the younger part of society are peculiarly endangered by it; it is, in short, in all its consequences, and certainly in its causes,

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of so foul and hateful a nature, that we cannot wonder to find it made a test, as it often is, to distinguish barbarous from civilized countries. In this point, then, those who set the example of such hardened impiety, such bare-faced breach of honor and honesty, such base and abandoned principles, do more hurt to the morals of the rising generation than words are capable of describing, and the accumulated wickedness they will have to answer for hereafter, may well make us shudder for their fate: for matrimony is holy, and sanctified by God the Father, by Christ and his Apostles, and among its moral uses, is especially meant to prevent that corruption and dissolution of manners, which are most notoriously repugnant to the laws of Christianity; which, suffered to prevail without check and restraint, cannot but unfit the soul for all higher enjoyments, and which, therefore, wherever reason and religion prevail as they should do, is justly discountenanced by the censure, and marked disapprobation, of all the rational and enlightened part of the community.

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munity. Another point, in which we ought to be very careful about the examples we set, is in regard to justice and honesty in all its branches. Injustice and dishonesty, fraud and falshood, no man will tolerate in another. Deceit and craft overthrow all the securities of society; so that truth is sure to have this regard shewn it at least, that we are willing enough to correct falshood in others wherever it appears. But how can we do this with any propriety, unless we are continually upon our guard to keep ourselves within the bounds of justice and sincerity? It is presumption in us to reproach others for a want of honesty, while we make no scruple of transgressing in this point ourselves; and yet undoubtedly it often happens, that while we would rebuke a child for telling a lie, we breed him up to manage his worldly concerns with such a narrow prudence, and such rules of caution and suspicion, as border upon craft. This is a contradiction, which I fear we could find frequent instances of, insomuch that it would appear as if a certain degree of artifice and cunning

ning was absolutely requisite in the affairs of life, a man being thought fair prey, that is either so open, so ingenuous, or so unsuspicious, as to let his neighbour take advantage of him. How are young persons to learn to reverence truth and fair dealing, when they see a degree of merit attached to such worldly wisdom and cunning? The last point in which we ought to be very careful what example we set, is in the government of our passions. Though our passions and desires were all implanted in us for wise and gracious purposes, yet we should always remember, that it is by them more than any thing else, that we are to be proved and tried; they are ever to be kept under a restraint and check, for all excess is an abuse, and as they all have a respect to this life more than the one to come, to indulge them too far, is to prefer worldly pleasures and concerns to the joyful prospects of eternity. The laws of the second table afford us a general outline of our duty in this respect. If we would have our children learn to honor us, we must remember there is an honor

due

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due to ourselves first, from ourselves; we must not expect to be really honored, if we only live to degrade ourselves in the eyes of our family, by continual breaches of the laws of God, and frequent offences against the order and decorum of civil society; if we suffer them to see us daily gratifying our passions without restraint, and wantoning in riot and intemperance. All the other laws being positive injunctions, demand of us equal care and circumspection, if we would enforce them on our children; for how can young people think us sincere, in urging them upon them as the laws of God, if we, by our conduct, shew we are nevertheless not afraid ourselves to transgress them? To conclude; the importance of Example is most palpable and manifest: a bad example is of more danger, and may truly and unquestionably work more real ill, than any offensive weapon in the hand of a murderer; the blind may be led astray by it, the innocent corrupted, the helpless deluded, the body contaminated, the soul destroyed; but a good example will have all the merit of

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the most active virtue; for, besides that our piety and good deeds will ascend up to Heaven before us, as memorials in our own behalf, those that strive to render themselves patterns of all good works, may be the instruments of blessings to numberless of their fellow creatures. SERM. VII.

There are some strong things relative to this duty of Example, in the second chapter of St. Paul to Titus, with which I shall take leave to conclude—"*But speak thou* "*the things which become sound doctrine*— "*that the aged men be sober, grave, tem-* "*perate, sound in faith, in charity, in pa-* "*tience. The aged women, likewise, that* "*they be in behaviour as becometh holiness,* "*teachers of good things*; *that they may teach* "*the young women to be sober, to love their* "*husbands, to love their children, to be dis-* "*creet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obe-* "*dient to their own husbands, that the word* "*of God be not blasphemed. Young men,* "*likewise, exhort to be sober-minded. In all* "*things shewing thyself* a pattern of good works."

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SERMON VIII.

JOHN III, 11.

ON EXAMPLE.

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.

THESE words, in the Epistle itself, are connected with a particular case. The Apostle had just been speaking of one, who had, by his froward behaviour, impeded the progress of the Gospel; from which, taking occasion to make it a subject of caution to Gaius, to whom he was writing, he subjoins, "*Beloved, follow not,* (that is, imitate not,) *that which is evil, but that which* "*is good;*" and he inforces his injunction with this further observation, "*For he that* "*does good, is of God; but he that does evil,* "*has not seen God.*" One general lesson to be deduced from these words is obvious enough,

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enough, namely, the wisdom and propriety of following after what is good, in preference to following after evil, in any way whatever; but the words seem capable of affording us a more particular piece of instruction, and that is, not to *imitate* those who do evil. Perhaps of all the temptations to do evil, there is none more dangerous than that of example. Standing entirely alone, the boldest may feel some compunction at the thought of transgressing God's laws; but when he thinks he has associates, and that he is neither the worst, nor the only sinner, he acquires a false confidence, which, if it does not quiet, at least serves to sooth his unsettled conscience. Besides, as the judgment of God is reserved for a future state, and his providence does not interfere in the present scene of things, with any immediate acts of retribution, often does it happen that the unrighteous seem, for a time, to flourish and to prosper; and this, however improperly, becomes another source of encouragement. Scarcely any thing can tend more to prove the necessity of a revelation, than

than this very circumstance, that the wicked so often seem to attain to the object of their wishes, for this is clearly the way of the world, and if we knew no more than what the world, in this particular, offers to our notice and experience, we might well hesitate in our choice, whether, in common prudence, we should not do better, upon certain occasions, to follow those that do evil than those that do good. Certainly riches, very often, are accumulated by unfair and inequitable measures, and pleasures and indulgencies purchased with those riches, which, though equally disreputable, perhaps, in reality, yet are not unattended with much temporary enjoyment and satisfaction. But by the aid of revelation, we are not left to be necessarily deceived by these circumstances, we are taught to look much beyond the present consequences of things, and, instead of regarding the worldly advantages that may seem to flow naturally from any such base actions, we are directed to consider and reflect upon the effect they may have in recommending us to the care and the love of God. So

that

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that the Apostle is careful to propose no worldly motive whatever, but concludes his advice with this emphatic remark: "*He* "*that does good is of God; but he that does* "*evil hath not seen God;*" or, in other words, hath not a proper knowledge of God. To be "*of God,*" in this passage, must needs imply, to be of the number of his faithful and obedient servants; and, therefore, in the opposition of the other part of the sentence, the wicked and disobedient are described as those who have not seen, or have no just apprehensions of God's most exalted attributes. Particularly his continual presence, and supreme authority over all the creatures of his own hands. All the laws of God may be considered as so many tests of our loyalty to him; for every transgression is actually no less than a virtual refusal to have God to reign over us. It matters not that we were not made parties in the establishment of these laws, for our obedience is connected with our very existence. It is wholly of God's bounty that we are what we are, or rather, that we are at all; and therefore

therefore it must needs be most absurd to pretend that God might not exact any services he should think proper. It is, indisputably, as great an act of God's bounty to leave it to our own choice whether we will obey, or not, as to have, at first, called us into existence; by the latter act of his providence, we are rendered capable of all the enjoyments that life, either temporal or eternal, can afford; by the former, we are rendered like to the Almighty himself, in having a freedom of will allowed us, and a power of establishing the perfection of our nature, by a voluntary adherence to whatever is right and proper: only this must be remembered, that God still retains the sovereignty. No acts of virtue will raise us to any independant state of perfection, only we shall thereby prove ourselves to be the faithful servants of him who made us, and thereby fit, at least, to receive whatever recompence or reward it may be his pleasure to bestow. Those who take a different course, and act in opposition to God's will, could not be better described than

SERM. VIII. than in the words of the Apostle, "*They* "*that do evil have not seen God.*" If they had seen him they would know him better than to dare to disobey him; if they had wit or wisdom enough to see him, only in his works, and to discover in them his majesty, and power, and goodness, they would be equally withheld from all attempts to do evil in his sight. For as he is supremely great, surely he will not be mocked: as he is supremely wise, surely he cannot be deceived: as he is supremely powerful, surely his displeasure is not to be despised. And such knowledge of God must be a very great security; for as it has been asserted that example has great influence, a just knowledge of God must for ever prevent our following any bad example, so far as to transgress his laws. For who can be an example to us, that shall be, in any way, capable of coming into competition with God? The great in *our* sight, are infinitely low in the sight of God; the powerful, weak; the rich, poor; the wise, foolish; besides, they can afford us no security. The great that transgress,

transgress, however prosperous here, will be as sorely punished, in the world to come, as the most lowly and obscure sinner against God's laws. Riches will purchase no respite; power accomplish no relief. Even if we follow a multitude to do evil, with every individual of that multitude we shall have our individual share of woe and misery. And this besides should weigh with us; example, so far from being an excuse, must be a heavy aggravation, for it is as much as to side with an acknowledged foe to God. It is to be in confederacy against him. In which case, besides our own individual sin, we are partakers in the crimes of others; we prefer their sanction and authority, to the authority and commands of God himself. The laws of God are so addressed to every man, individually, that as we have no occasion, so we have no excuse for looking to the conduct of others, as a guide or example to ourselves. Good examples, indeed, it is well to imitate, but, nevertheless, the laws of God are so explicit, that we might act well by mere obedience to them, without any example,

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and surely as well in confidence of his promises, as upon the encouragement of any other man's good deeds. But if we may act well without the good example of our neighbour, surely to be deterred from acting well by his bad example, is to cast off God's law, and wilfully to reject all his precepts and admonitions. In the mean while, what encouragement is given to us, instead of following a multitude to do evil, to resist their bad example, and do good in spite of a wicked world! If only to do good, simply, is to be "*of God*," or, in other words, is to be God's, that is, God's own faithful servants; surely, to be good in opposition to a host of sinners, must greatly enhance our merit in the eyes of God: and this is well worthy our consideration, for it would, surely, work great good among us, if every man could be brought to reflect, that the more wicked the rest of the world might happen to be, the greater might be his reward for resisting the contagion of such evil doings. It is not possible to conceive a higher or more exalted character, than the inflexibly good and upright

upright man in the midst of a perverse and evil generation. This man may truly evince that he serves his God of mere choice. Independent of all that revelation assures us of, we might well suppose a good man among sinners, must be like a friend amidst a host of enemies; and that God will be pleased especially to notice such a steady attachment. And this serves to put the wisdom of being righteous past all doubt; as it is required of us, individually and simply, it is wise to obey, let the rest of the world do as they will; but even if sinners abound, and strive to entice you, so far from this lessening the obligation, it greatly increases it; as it demands more fortitude, it enhances the merit; when placed in such circumstances, you are peculiarly called upon to testify your loyalty to God, lest, if awed by the force of numbers, you should be tempted by word or deed to deny him before men, you, yourself, should be denied, in the day of judgment, before the angels of God. It is fit also to remind you, upon this occasion,

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SERM. VIII. of your further obligations, as Christians; by the rite of baptism you are positively enlisted under the banners of Christ. It is true this ceremony, perhaps, took place in your infancy, but this is of no moment; when you came to years of discretion, you were expected either to abandon or to confirm the obligation. If, by word or deed, you have wilfully dissolved the compact then solemnly entered into, you are no Christians, nor have any place in this, Christ's, holy temple. If you have not openly dissolved the compact, but yet act in opposition to it, you are in a state of rebellion and insubordination, and must justly deserve to be punished for such wilful desertion of your acknowledged Lord and Saviour. In short, though evil, simply as evil, is very bad, yet, indeed, evil in a Christian must be worse, because there is such an accumulation of obligations. You have a creator, redeemer, and sanctifier to obey and conciliate; all acting and co-operating for your salvation and eternal happiness; all inviting you, upon certain

fixed

fixed conditions, to become a partaker of the joys of heaven. Will you slight such promises, and, instead of proving yourselves to be "*of God,*" by doing good, "*follow that which is evil,*" to the loss and destruction of all your hopes? For you must remember, that the glorious hopes of Christianity ought to animate you to obedience most especially. It is not a hardship that you were dedicated to Christ in your childhood, and before you were capable of giving your consent to the ceremony, though indeed it lays you under a stronger obligation to do good and eschew evil; but by this dedication of your souls and bodies to Christ, you were put under the immediate protection of his holy spirit, and if your obligation to do good became greater, yet your hopes of assistance and prospects of reward became greater too; for though Christ died for the sins of the whole world, and all that are finally saved, will be saved through the merits of his cross and passion, yet, among these, those that died before his appearance in the

SERM. VIII. the flesh, as well as others to whom the light of Christ's Gospel has never reached, will, in all probability, be somewhat distinguished from those who have had a clear sense and knowledge of his most merciful interposition in behalf of mankind. As "*every man will be accepted according to that he hath, not according to that he hath not,*" so every man will assuredly be judged, and probably be rewarded accordingly. The Gentiles, without the law, will be judged as without the law, and saved and forgiven accordingly. But those who have been blessed with the light of Christ's Gospel, will be judged by that Gospel, and rewarded as well for their obedience to the law, as for the proof they have thereby given of their faith and confidence in Christ; but then, on the other hand, the wicked who have sinned against this holy and perspicuous law, will be judged with more rigour, and condemned to a heavier punishment, as not only having sinned against so great a light, but as having thereby also, by their wicked deeds,

made the cross of Christ of none effect. SERM. VIII.
The Christian, therefore, stands in this situation, that as, through the merciful redemption of Christ, stronger hopes of happiness are given to him, of him will greater obedience and more steady attachment be required; and we shall do very wrong to suffer this ever to escape from our remembrance. The condition of a Christian, if we properly understand our profession, and the nature of our baptismal covenant, is quite different from that of others of the sons of men, in regard to good and evil. To abstain from evil, or even to do and practise what is good, without any remembrance of the Lord that bought us, must inevitably loose much of its effect, if not become exceedingly blame-worthy: for, at all events, nothing will excuse that cold indifference and torpid insensibility which can suffer us to disregard the loving kindness of our blessed Saviour, in taking our lowly and debased nature upon him, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption. While he enjoins

SERM. VIII. joins us to do good, and not evil, all the days of our lives, is it to be thought that he could mean that we should forget his mighty work of atonement and sacrifice, for the pardon of our sins? Certainly, when he instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, he added the duty of remembrance and commemoration, to the other duties of the pious Christian. The duty of following after good, in preference to evil, is general: it is a duty flowing from our very nature, as the creatures of God's hands; it is a duty as binding on the Heathen as the Christian; but to do good instead of evil, for Jesus Christ's sake, is to confess him before men, not only with our lips, but by the upright course and tenor of our lives; and all the common expressions of the Gospel tend to press this home on our minds. To do evil is not simply so, in the case of a Christian, but, in the words of Scripture, for a Christian to do evil, is, "*to crucify the Son of* "*God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*" "*To tread under foot the Son of God, and* "*do*

" *do despite to the spirit of grace.*" " *To* SERM.
" *deny him before men,*" and to side with VIII.
those enemies of his holy Gospel who will
not " *that HE, (the Lord and Giver of all*
" *things!) should reign over them.*" Where-
as to do good, as a Christian, is represented
as the height of gratitude and loyalty to
the blessed Jesus. " *I count all things but*
" *loss,*" says St. Paul, " *for the excellency*
" *of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,*
" *for whom I have suffered the loss of all*
" *things, and do count them but dung, that I*
" *may win Christ, and be found in him; not*
" *having my own righteousness, which is of*
" *the law, but that which is through the faith*
" *of Christ, the righteousness which is of God*
" *by faith:*" and again, " *I press* toward
" *the mark, for the prize of the high calling*
" *of God, in Christ Jesus:*" In his second
Epistle to Timothy, he reminds him that,
through the Gospel, " *God knoweth them*
" *that are his,*" so that he would have
" *every one that nameth the name of Christ,*
" *depart from iniquity:*" and he comforts
him with the assurance " *there is laid up*
" *a crown*

SERM. VIII. " *a crown of righteousness, which the Lord,* " *the righteous Judge, shall give in the last* " *day,*" not to the merely good, but " *unto* " *all them that love his appearing.*" Let us be diligent and careful then, not only to prove ourselves good men, but in all things so to manifest our love of Christ, as to prove ourselves steady and determined Christians. Let us follow none to do evil, but let us follow after Christ, who in every respect was an example to us, that we should, expressly as the Scripture says, " *follow his steps.*" Meditate frequently on the emphatic address of Paul to Timothy, which, as it contains a just summary of true Christian godliness, having a respect both to the motives conducive thereto, and the sanctions by which it is, through Christ, enforced; I shall make the conclusion of my discourse.

" *But thou, O man of God, flee these* " *things, and follow after righteousness, god-* " *liness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*" " *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold*

" *on*

" *on eternal life whereunto thou art called.* SERM.
" *I give thee charge in the sight of God, who* VIII.
" *quickeneth all things, and before Christ*
" *Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed*
" *a good confession; that thou keep this Com-*
" *mandment without spot, unrebukeable, until*
" *the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:*
" *which in his Times he shall shew, who is*
" *the blessed and holy Potentate, the King of*
" *Kings, and Lord of Lords* *."

* 1 Tim. ch. vi. 14. 15.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

ON CONTENTMENT.

1 TIMOTHY VI. 6.

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

THERE are some dispositions which men are inclined to encourage, manifestly to their own loss and discomfiture; revenge, for instance, is of this nature; all wrath, malice, envy, and hatred; covetousness, inordinate ambition; but, above all, discontent. (To begin with the most obvious argument on this head) supposing discontent to have some shadow of reason on its side, that is, supposing our condition was really *perversely* unfortunate; that all we most depended upon had failed; all we most desired and wished for been withheld, would a spirit of discontent mend our

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our misfortunes, or lighten our griefs? Certainly not; it would be (to speak by a figure) giving advantage to our enemy; to suffer, and not murmur, takes away all shame at once; but to suffer and to murmur too is only to add to our own distresses. But though this seems a palpable folly, yet nothing is more common. The least misfortune that befals us, throws us off our guard, and we immediately forget that no misfortune is greater than an uneasy mind; so, if our troubles arise from any injury that our neighbour has done us, either by actual violence, or through neglect, instantly a spirit of revenge arises; we are unquiet to the greatest degree, till we have either made him suffer in return, or till we have slighted him with equal coldness and indifference. In the meanwhile this is not to be done without great agitation of mind; every indifferent thing goes wrong till the final object of revenge and retaliation is accomplished, and when the whole matter comes to be wound up, the result is this, that having with much trouble

trouble suffered an injury, we put ourselves to a great deal more trouble to inflict an injury in return. This is certainly downright folly; and, like many other mistakes that men fall into, all "vanity and vexation "of spirit." Wrath and anger are of the same nature, though more sudden, perhaps, and less durable, than revenge in general, yet they are very turbulent passions, greatly discomposing and agitating both the mind and body; so far from leading to any good end, as commonly, by the confession of those most subject to them, exceedingly to increase the evils by which they are excited. Envy is a passion also no less troublesome than base, for ever interfering with our happiness, and lessening all our pleasures; leading us into comparisons productive always of pain, mortification, and despondency; hatred is equally distressing; and covetousness, forbidding us ever to be satisfied with present possessions, renders us a prey to intemperate desires, or gloomy apprehensions. All these passions evidently fail of their end; indulged

SERM. IX. dulged to correct or avert some ill or other, they invariably increase and aggravate its effects. And what can we say, better of discontent? Discontent can only arise from some sense of evil, either real or imaginary; when it arises from any real evil, if it could in any manner remove the evil itself, we would grant it to be reasonable; but can discontent make us *rich*, if fortune has made us *poor?* Can discontent make us *well*, if disease has made us *sick?* Can discontent set us up on high, if Providence has cast our lot among the lowly and obscure? Can discontent *feed us* if we are *hungry*, *clothe us* if we are *naked*, *comfort us* if we are *wretched* and *forlorn?* No, none of these things can discontent accomplish, but on the contrary it must exceedingly heighten all these calamities; (for discontent, at best, is no other than great uneasiness of mind, and useless anxiety) but if, under any of the above misfortunes, we are not discontented, then they all become more tolerable. The poor man may be cheerful and gay; the

the sick man patient and full of hope; the lowly, humble and submissive, and so on; but cheerfulness and gaiety, patience and hope, meekness and humility, are all free from agitation and anxiety, and therefore are in fact blessings and advantages which the misfortunes we endure may only the more set off and heighten; for to be rich and cheerful is only to be, what if we are not, riches are of no account; but if we are poor and cheerful, sick but full of hope, then we fairly triumph over our misfortunes, and most effectually derive good from evil. The Apostle, therefore, might well have pronounced contentment alone to be great gain; for if it tends to lessen all our losses, surely it is great gain. But, in the words of my text he has gone much further, and has given contentment its noblest character: "For," saith he, "*godliness* with *contentment* is *great gain.*" God is the author of all things; all we have, be it what it will, God alone has given to us; all we have not, God alone has, by his eternal providence, withheld from us; all we can hereafter hope for,

SERM. IX. pray for, desire, or expect, can come from God alone, and no other; for his providence governs all things, both in Heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now to be discontented with any state or condition we may be in, is great ingratitude towards God, who, whatever we may want, at least gave us the little we have; then to murmur because we have not more, is in every way to arraign God's providence, whose wisdom and goodness ought to be a pledge to us, that nothing is withheld but for wise and good purposes; to exercise perhaps our patience, to prove our faith, to try our constancy; and all these with a view to *our* future reward and benefit. Lastly, we cannot discontentedly repine at our lot, without running great danger of forfeiting what God may have in store for us, if we do *not* murmur and repine. It must needs appear reasonable to think, that God will not bestow his best gifts hereafter on those who have despised and abused such gifts, as he has, of his mere mercy, already vouchsafed to them here below. Those who are so presumptuous here as to say, that

that God has not given them enough, may well be excluded from having more, when the Almighty comes to reward his faithful and obedient servants. But, on the contrary, what bounds can be set to the mercies and bounty of God hereafter, to those who shall in this life have submitted without murmuring and repining, to all his statutes and ordinances? With what transcendant riches may he crown the poor man in the world to come, who shall have borne his load of poverty with submission and patience! With what glorious scenes of joy and happiness may he cheer the wretched and disconsolate, who shall in the midst of their distress here below have looked up to their God alone for succour and relief! What God may have in store for those who rely upon him is only to be described in the words of the Apostle, "*Eye hath not seen,* "*nor ear heard, neither have entered into* "*the heart of man, the things which God* "*has prepared for those that love him.*" Godliness, then, may well be represented as great gain, for Heaven is full of comforts and reward, for the good, let their

SERM. IX. condition here below be what it will; and this should serve particularly to recommend the virtue of contentment to those most destitute of the good things of this world, for this will be sure to put them, hereafter, upon a footing with the very richest of the sons of men. The real treasures which a man should desire, are not the riches and luxuries of this world, which are all vain and transitory, liable to damage, loss, and abuse; but the treasures of Heaven, which nothing can impair, depreciate, or diminish; and these treasures, let us be ever so poor and destitute at present, godliness with contentment will assuredly put us in possession of. The Apostle seems to allude to this, in the verse immediately following my text, and in which he certainly means to prove the reasonableness of his precept, "*For*," says he, "*we brought nothing into this world, "and it is certain we can carry nothing "out*;" that is, the things of this world have in fact only a transitory and precarious value; there has been a time when we were destitute of every thing, and a time will

will come, when every thing we now possess will be equally superfluous and unnecessary; therefore, our true gain will consist, not in multiplying our worldly goods and accommodations, but in conducting ourselves so that when we lay down this life, we may deserve the rewards, and honours, and pleasures of another. And this we shall do, if we rely upon God for what is to come, and rightly esteem what he has already bestowed; "*having food and raiment, then,*" the Apostle goes on to say, "*let us be therewith content,*" which was well added, because it tends to shew, that Christianity, though it is calculated to exalt us above the concerns of this world, in a spiritual sense, yet never was designed to withdraw men from the innocent and useful occupations of life. That desire of bettering our worldly condition, which gives birth to labour and industry, may be very well accompanied both with godliness and contentment. It is not only allowable, but exceedingly praise-worthy, to wish to advance both ourselves and families, by care and diligence, provided we are not, as many

SERM. IX. many are, impatient of success; we may be as anxious as we please, to prosper and grow rich, provided we seek to do so only by the means of honest industry, and are content till we do prosper; not hurried into discontent by casual disappointments, nor ready to murmur so soon as the slightest obstacle is thrown in our way; and even if finally we fail of all success, if all our projects are defeated, and all our hopes thwarted, still it is likely to be our greatest gain if we learn to bear this disappointment properly; surely it requires no great understanding to discover, that the Providence which manifestly ordained and overlooks all things, may have hindered our success for wise and gracious purposes. It is easy, at any time, to shew that prosperity might eventually be no gain: it often leads men into such extravagancies, both as to their actions and their desires, that indeed it may well be expected to lead rather to great losses than great gains. If prosperity, by chance, leads to contentment, it seldom leads to godliness; the more we are satisfied with this world, the less

less we are apt to think of God and Heaven; it is melancholy that it should be so, but so it is. And all this, no doubt, the Apostle had expressly in view when he wrote the Epistle we are discoursing upon; for, a little beyond my text (the whole has been read to you in the second lesson of this evening's service*) he observes, properly enough, "*that they that will be rich, fall* "*into temptation and a snare, and into* "*many foolish and hurtful lusts, which* "*drown men in destruction and perdi-* "*tion*;" so that it is clear, that prosperity may be no gain; yet, food and raiment are held to be necessary; and these never were to be obtained without some toil and industry, even in ages the most wild and uncivilized. Indeed the same Apostle, in other places, expressly recommends industry: he even goes so far, in one of his Epistles, as to say, "*if any provide not for* "*his own, and especially for those of his* "*own household, he hath denied the faith,* "*and is worse than any infidel*;" and in SERM. IX.

* November 17,

another

SERM. IX. another place he expressly lays it down, as a general rule of life, "*if any will not* "*work neither should he eat.*" Contentment then, is not required of us, so strictly according to the precise meaning of the word, as if we were to remain indolently indifferent to the affairs and businesses of life; but that, engaging in them with a proper spirit of godliness, we should set ourselves above the common chances and casualties of such concerns, relying solely upon Providence to prosper our endeavours, and willing to wait even till another life, if here below success should not answer our expectations.

Certainly it would seem, that by the providence of God, this world was meant to be full of hazards and difficulties, in order, no doubt, both to convince men that there would be another state of things, and to direct their views accordingly; so that a considerate man might well discover, that in regard to real happiness, our greatest losses here might lead to great gain hereafter. St. Paul, himself, learnt this

this great lesson in the school of Christ; there alone indeed it is to be learnt. We have his own declarations upon this head, couched in terms the most plain and intelligible; "*I have learnt,*" says he, "*in* "*whatsoever state I am, therewith to be* "*content: I know both how to be abased* "*and how to abound: every where, and* "*in all things, I am instructed both to be* "*full and to be hungry, both to abound* "*and to suffer need. I can do all things* "*through Christ who strengtheneth me.*" What Christianity did enable St. Paul to go through, stands upon record; he made no vain boasting; he rather indeed suffered only the worst extreme; he was abased, but never did abound; he was often hungry, seldom full; many times and oft did he suffer need, but riches and abundance not once fell to his lot: yet, to the day of his death, he remained faithful to his Lord and Saviour, and left instructions behind him, to excite the same fervor in others. None of these are more earnest and expressive than what accompany my text; some I have

SERM. IX. have already repeated, but there are others worthy our especial attention. "The love "of money," says the Apostle (he might have said at once the love of all worldly pleasures) "is the root of all evil: which, "while some have coveted after, they have "erred from the faith, and pierced them-"selves through with many sorrows. But "thou, O man of God, flee these things, "and follow after righteousness, godliness, "faith, love, patience, meekness." But granting that riches may be accumulated by fair and upright measures, still looking upon them rather as a snare than any positive and lasting gain, he thus forewarns the prosperous and wealthy: "Charge "them that are rich in this world, that "they be not high-minded, nor trust "in uncertain riches, but in the Living "God, who giveth us richly all things to "enjoy; that they do good, that they be "*rich* in good works, ready to distribute, "willing to communicate; laying up in "store for themselves a good foundation "against the time to come, that they may "lay

"lay hold on eternal life." Could any language better serve to set before us our true and real interest? It is not here we are to look for gain; "*What is a man* "*profited,*" saith our blessed Saviour himself, "*if he gain the whole world, and lose* "*his own soul?*" But the soul is endangered by ungodliness, and discontent is a main branch of it. We are to look to another world for real gain, even so entirely as to account death itself a gain, merely as removing us from the uncertainties of this life, to the hopes of eternal happiness through Christ. In short, the precept itself is one of those, so clear, as scarce to require argument, and yet so capable of proof as to admit of being set in a thousand different lights. But lest all other appeals should fail, the Apostle seems to have worded it so, as even to take advantage of our very foibles; for the hope of gain is a most predominant passion, we all wish for more in some way or other; more wealth or more honor; more health or more ease; more certainty and more security for all we do enjoy. Now the gain which godliness

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liness with Contentment may be said to lead to, embraces all these things: the treasures of Heaven, which they will open to us, are inexhaustible; the glories of Heaven transcending all that we can fancy or conceive. Sickness hath no place there, neither sorrow, nor pain; and all that we may attain to, in the realms above, so far from being transitory and perishable, like the pleasures of this life, shall, like the word of God, by which they are promised to us, endure for ever and ever.

"*Set your affections, then, on things* "*above, not on things on the earth!*" Do not withdraw yourselves from the honest labours of life; the state of society does not admit of it, nor does Christianity require it; but consider and reflect, even in the midst of your busiest occupations, that in comparison with the hopes and expectations of the life to come, they are really trifles light as air. It is granted you, to use the things of this world freely, provided you are careful not to abuse them to the loss and destruction of your souls: some things

things God himself has ordained to be indispensable necessaries of life, and he has appointed labour and industry to be the means of acquiring them; but even these are left still dependent on the especial bounty and providence of God, for without his favour, labour may fail of its end, and industry be unproductive; there is ever a previous step to be taken, which we shall all do well to think of, and meditate upon, ere we engage in any worldly pursuits whatsoever: if the objects we have in view are really necessary, we must needs grant that our Heavenly Father must know that we have need of such things; and in all cases of this nature our Lord himself has taught us how to act: "*Seek ye first,*" says he, "*the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,* "*and all these things shall be added unto* "*you.*" May this, then, be the guide of all our actions, the governing principle of all our undertakings! it is a pledge of prosperity and success which cannot fail, for it rests on the sure word of God. It is, indeed, the only infallible pledge of any man's prosperity; the only clue, which, leading

SERM. IX. leading upward to the joys of Heaven, will finally enable us to surmount the troubles and disquietudes, the cares and pains, the wants and distresses, the accidents and losses of this mortal life!

SERMON

SERMON X.

PROVERBS XVI. 31.

ON OLD AGE.

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

THE hoary head, as here applied, is a very obvious figure of speech, and must needs express the man full of years, on whom time and age have wrought that outward change of person, which commonly takes place as we advance towards the limits of human life. Old age has generally been allowed to have a natural claim to honor and respect. Nor is the reason of this difficult to discover; for as human knowledge is progressive, it is plain that the older a man is, the wiser we may expect him to be, and the wiser the better; for wisdom is one of those things which

SERM. X. which must be judged by its fruits. All is not wisdom that men are disposed to call so. Cunning and craft, buffoonery and wit, are often in their effects the very contrary of wisdom. Neither can knowledge of itself be said to constitute wisdom, for men may acquire great knowledge without having one grain of real wisdom. If a man know many difficult arts, or understand the whole circle of sciences, yet if he has not a competent idea of his own nature as a dependent being, or has not learnt so to provide for the chances of another life, as to have more to hope than to fear, such knowledge will be of no real service to himself beyond the compass of a few years; nor will it entitle him to any more honor or respect than is due to any other man who may be in his particular calling, let that be what it will, equally attentive, diligent, and industrious. The wisdom, therefore, that procures respect to age, is the wisdom and knowledge collected from a large and long experience of human life. Wisdom, founded on a discovery of the fleeting and transitory

transitory nature of all sublunary enjoyments; of the evil consequences, one time or other, of all wickedness and sin; the sorrow that is sure to follow from it, and the bitter reflections it inevitably leads to; the fear and apprehensions that arise in a man's mind when he comes to consider the precipice he stands on, and that he has hitherto only merited God's anger and displeasure. The consequent repentance and contrition that these reproaches of his conscience gradually induce, and the hope that springs up at last from becoming sensible of his errors, and so applying himself before the lamp of life is extinguished, to make his peace with God. This is the wisdom that renders age respectable; this is the saving knowledge which a long life is almost sure to lead to. For the pleasures of this world lose their attraction greatly as the body decays, and a man is then able to appreciate all that he has gained by them. Has he amassed great store of gold? his whole treasures cannot purchase him a respite from death, or stand him in any stead so soon as ever

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SERM. X. his doom is sealed. Has he passed his days in rioting and wantonness; or in a constant gratification of his senses, heedless of the condition of his soul? Lo! now those very senses that administered to these vain and unprofitable pleasures, grow feeble and dull; his limbs totter, his appetite fails, his eyes grow dim, his hearing indistinct, his very voice faulters; these have been but false friends, and so at the last they gradually forsake him. In the meanwhile, however, his Soul perhaps, which he had hitherto neglected, now steps forth to support and comfort him; *she* bids him notice this decay of his earthly tabernacle, and the vanity and emptiness of all he had been about; she calls upon him to reflect upon the many years he has passed unprofitably, and the very few that may be left in which to make up his accounts; she represents to him, perhaps, that *she* need not die with the body, that she is vigorous and firm still, though the body be wasting away, and that if the latter should soon descend to the grave none can convey thither the spirit of man. She encourages

encourages him to look forward to another life, and to the God who gave him the one he has enjoyed, and thus gradually leading him forward, from thought to thought, and from reflection to reflection, she fixes him at last where alone the aged can find rest and repose, in the way of repentance and amendment, of faith and hope. But though I have said and shewn, that old age commonly leads to this wisdom, because there is really nothing else for old age to take refuge in, and therefore becomes naturally respectable, as being enlightened by all the experience that life can afford; yet there is commonly another ground for this honor and respect due to age. It is probable that very old men, though they may not have been altogether good men, have yet been better than many others; for vice, and folly, and wickedness, seldom suffer a man to fill up the measure of his days. Vice is as destructive of the body as it is of the soul; the numerous diseases that intemperance leads to, I need not lay before you; they are among the very worst foes the body has to struggle

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SERM. X. with; some are slow and insidious, undermining the constitution by degrees, sapping the foundation imperceptibly, till, perhaps in the high day of youth, or of riper manhood, when our faculties have just attained to their natural perfection, the *stamina* of life fail, and as the Prophet beautifully expresses it, "*our sun goes down* "*while it is yet day*;" others assault the body more violently, with feverish pangs, and racking pains; these soon bring the unhappy sufferer to the grave. For the body is a delicate machine, capable of doing well for many years if prudently and discreetly managed, but easily broken to pieces if roughly handled, or hurried on too fast. These things being considered, we must needs suppose a man, full of years, is one who has avoided these imprudencies; who has, in a great measure, lived soberly, temperately, and chastely; who has preserved his body vigorous and healthy, by labour and industry, his mind unruffled, by a steady purpose of acting uprightly, and bearing patiently. Besides, we may have some ground to believe, that if

if a man, whom we now see aged and decrepid, has had his failings in his time, that in his youth he has been somewhat wild, and in his manhood now and then intemperate, yet that as there is probably a measure even in these things, that he has not been incorrigibly bad at any time, so as to deserve to be cut off in his sins; for, no doubt, though we cannot appreciate matters so thoroughly as to see to the very end of things, yet those who die in their youth, through wicked courses, of drunkenness, debauchery, and intemperance of all sorts, are known to the great searcher of hearts to be, if not entirely, yet as near as can be, incorrigibly bad, so that they are cut off suddenly, either because it is known they never will repent, and so had better not live to seduce others, or else they are taken away for fear that if they lived longer, they would so fill up the full measure of their sins, as to be wholly unpardonable. Certainly, we should not see so unnatural a course of things ever take place, as the abrupt and premature death of young persons (especially those who have

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SERM. X. have transgressed God's holy laws) but for good and gracious and merciful ends, which one time or other, but not here, we shall more fully understand. This, however, we may be sure of, that sin and wickedness, drunkenness and debauchery, have this moral use, that they are sure to make a young man old before his time, and to bring him to an untimely grave; and therefore, that those who really "*love life*," and would fain "*see good days*," must needs, as an indispensable step towards it, refrain from all such hurtful and evil courses. The old man, therefore, we may reasonably suppose, has in his time done this; or if not, that he has been spared, because he was never altogether bad, and is now, therefore, probably in a state of repentance and righteousness, and therefore on this account, at last, if not before, highly respectable. And, according to the common course of things, it would seem as if men were permitted to attain to great age, either to be an example or a warning. For, as there can be no greater example than to see a man full of hope, and confi-

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dent in his God, when the pleasures of this life have lost all their charms; to see him not only at rest and at ease in his mind, while his body is every hour drawing nearer to the grave, but full of joy at the thoughts of passing into the presence of his Maker, and being received with that exhilarating welcome, "*Well done thou "true and faithful servant;*" so we must all know there cannot well be a greater warning, than an old man, with all his sins hanging about him, his senses all failing, and his body decaying, and no hope beyond the grave! No hope!. do I say? nay full of fears, and apprehensions, and inexpressible anguish. For, who can give him any consolation? No one can renew his relish for this life, no one can repair the waste and decay of his body, no one can save him from the stroke of death; no one can dare to insure him against a judgment to come, and punishment due to his evil deeds. Though, perhaps, we are not always ready to pursue this train of reflection, yet that it occurs to every mind, we may conclude from the general disgust and

SERM. X. and horror that an aged sinner excites in our breasts. But we need not dwell longer on so hateful a picture, let us rather turn to a further consideration of the words of my text: ‘ *an hoary head is a crown of* “ *glory, if it be found in the way of righ-* “ *teousness.*” A hoary head, however naturally respectable, as arguing a wider experience of human life, and as being passed the age of indiscretion, imprudence, and intemperance, becomes a crown of glory only on one condition, namely, that “ *it* “ *be found in the way of righteousness.*” For, it is a just explanation that the son of Sirach gives us, when he observes, “ *much* “ *experience is the crown of old men, and the* “ *fear of God is their glory* *. A crown of glory is no earthly ornament; the King of Glory, while he sojourned on earth, had, as you all know, no better than a crown of thorns: a crown of glory is the inheritance of Heaven; it is our birth-right, not as the sons of men, but as the sons of God. We must needs conclude, therefore, that

* Ecclus. xxv. 6.

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the hoary head is only here said to be a crown of glory, as it is the best earnest of such a reward hereafter, be it but "*found* "*in the way of righteousness*," and well may we think thus of it; for when the head is silvered o'er with age, temptations have lost their force; the flesh is weak; the world uninteresting; and even Satan cannot seduce us any longer with the follies of life, for our body is too feeble to follow him. Our righteousness then, at such a time, if ever, must be fixed and confirmed; not in danger from the world behind us, and highly encouraged and supported by the immediate prospect of the world at hand; in the admirable words of the author of the book of Esdras, then "*intem-* "*perance is at an end, infidelity is cut off,* "*righteousness is grown, and truth is sprung* "*up*;" upon which he justly observes, "*then shall no man be able to save him that* "*is destroyed, nor to oppress him that hath* "*gotten the victory.*" As the body decays the soul is all we have to trust to; and the soul remains ready to point out an hereafter. But we may well suppose a man will

SERM. X. will not have passed to this last stage of life without learning much of the current opinions about a future life; that he will know what expectations he may be allowed to indulge, with regard to his condition beyond the grave. What those of other persuasions, or other countries, may think upon these occasions, we have nothing here to do with: we have, in the nature of things, only to consider what may be the condition of a true Christian at this awful and interesting period; and can any thing be more glorious than the hopes held forth in the Gospel of Christ? The Gospel of Christ, after the world from its first creation had been in doubts and perplexities about the future state of man, at length disclosed, in terms plain and obvious to the most simple understanding, this most animating truth, that we shall not all sleep for ever in the grave, but that we shall be changed—changed from this mortal and corruptible state we now are in, to a state of incorruption, honor, and immortality; that, when our Saviour and Redeemer, who is now ascended to the

the Heaven of Heavens, comes down again to take cognizance of our ways, the trumpet of Heaven shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible—thus much as to our future resurrection from the grave. But let us not be too quick and hasty in our judgment of things: this, it is true, tells us we shall all rise again. We shall all live for ever in another state, when, at the voice of God, we shall arise from the grave; but though the resurrection is to be general, is it to be without distinction? Are the good and the bad, the righteous and unrighteous, upon the same footing in this respect? Will the great God, who is to call them forth from the grave, receive with equal benignity, the pious worshipper, and the impious blasphemer of his holy name? No, we all know better than this; the wicked man knows it himself; he knows it so well, that perhaps he almost rather wishes he might not rise at all; O, how inglorious! how contrary to his nature as a rational being! Yet there are such; and, what is worse, they generally so much wish to believe them-

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themselves mortal, and not to be called forth again to judgment, that they try to make others believe, like themselves, that there is no God, that Heaven is a fable, and hell a chimera! but these are ignoble souls. *We* hope for better things, and, as we are anxious and eager to contend for the crown of glory, so we are bold to defy all the enemies of our nature, ranged under their three great leaders, the flesh, the world, and the devil. This, however, I say, supposing we are true Christians, for our profession is to follow Christ; if we do not do so, therefore, we are not only sinful, inasmuch as we disobey his written laws, but we are traitors and rebels against him whom we have acknowledged for our leader. But, to return: the same Gospel that tells us the dead are to rise again, tells us another most awful truth; namely, that when that hour arrives in which we are all to come forth from our graves, "*they that have done good shall rise to the* "*resurrection of life, but those that have done* "*evil to the resurrection of damnation;*" or, as another Evangelist expresses it, "*these* "*shall*

" *shall go away into everlasting punishment,* SERM.
" *but the righteous into life eternal.*" We X.
now see the glorious hopes that the Gospel of Christ holds out to those that " *shall be* " *found in the way of righteousness* ;" shall be found, I say, for though we shall not all live (none of us indeed most probably) till the day of doom, yet such as we die, such we shall be found at the coming of our Lord. It is not much anticipating matters, then, to say, that the hoary head that is in the way of righteousness, is such an earnest of approaching honor and reward, that as far as it can deserve to excite our veneration and respect, to give influence and authority to him that is so distinguished ; to raise him high in the estimation of his fellow-creatures, and to set him above all the sordid pleasures of this life ; it is little less than a real crown of glory even here below ; but with regard to the prospects of futurity, perhaps the next day, hour, or very minute, may accomplish the change. To-morrow, perhaps, he who now is before you, tottering under the burden of age, and worn down with the weight of his years,

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years, "*shall have departed from the vain* "*shadow of this world, and have received* "*glory of the Lord.*" But, is it, that the words of my text, and all that has been said upon them, are of concern only to one period of man's life? Have I been preaching all this while only to the aged and infirm? Is there no moral to be gathered from these words, applicable to us all in general? Certainly life is not such a sure holding, as that any of us can depend upon being preserved till the head becomes hoary with age; and yet certainly every one of us has a secret wish to live as long as his fellows. Now, I have before shewn, that all the lusts and vanities of life, have a natural tendency to shorten our days. Those, therefore, that pass their lives in such excesses, have no reason to expect the sober moments of old age, in which they shall have time to repent and turn to God. A man, who is wasting the early part of life in drunkenness and debaucheries, sin and wickedness, has only these two chances before him, either that of being cut off prematurely, in the midst

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of his errors, or else of living to undergo the pains and torments of a disordered body, added to the bitter reflections of a wounded conscience. On the contrary, he who applies himself to honest industry, is frugal and temperate, and above all things keeps himself in the way of righteousness, is likely to see long life and good days, to preserve his body, if not strong yet at least healthy, and free from pain to the last hour; to sink gradually to the grave, content to quit the transitory scenes of this world, and prepared to meet his Saviour and his God, in the everlasting realms above. But, to conclude, let us not think we are to wait till the head is hoary, before we need put ourselves into the way of righteousness; though we may not attain to old age, we shall certainly attain to another life. In the other world, crowns of glory are awaiting the good, whether this, their mortal life, shall be concluded in youth, in manhood, or in second childhood; but punishment, and grievous pains are prepared for the bad. The aged have this blessing peculiar to them, that they may,

SERM. X. may, if they will, make up their accounts before they go hence, and are no more seen; but the young will equally be called upon hereafter, and therefore it is equally of importance to them to keep themselves prepared; for righteousness is the only ground of hope, whether we are young or old, healthy or infirm, rich or poor; age, and bodily strength, and outward advantages, have really nothing to do with it, "*for*," as Solomon saith, "*though the* "*righteous be prevented with death, yet* "*shall he be in rest; for honourable age* "*is not that which standeth in length of* "*time, nor that is measured by number of* "*years; but wisdom is grey hair unto men,* "*and an unspotted life is old age;*" and yet further, and with which I shall conclude, "*the righteous that are dead shall* "*condemn the ungodly that are living, and* "*youth that is soon perfected, the many years* "*and old age of the unrighteous.*"

SERMON XI.

ON DOING WHAT WE WILL WITH OUR OWN.

MATTHEW XX. 15.

Is it not lawful to do what I will with mine own?

STRICTLY speaking, there is but one Being in the universe to whom this question can apply; and to him in fact it refers, when the parable in which it occurs is rightly interpreted. Except the Eternal God of all, no one has what he may really call his own; every thing is derived; the laws of society may give us a right against the intrusion and usurpations of our fellow-creatures, but they can never give us an absolute independent right to the most common earthly possession. But though

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this is capable of demonstration to any one but a confirmed atheist, yet it is astonishing how many errors men fall into by acting upon a contrary persuasion—upon a full persuasion that many things are so much their own, that it must be lawful for them to do with them exactly what they will. The laws of man, indeed, when wisely instituted, seldom go higher than to prevent our using our possessions to the detriment of others. As long as this is avoided, it is pretty generally acknowledged to be lawful, where the laws are at all liberal, that men should do what they will with their own. But how many things may be abused without immediate detriment to other men! If individuals could be defended against themselves by human laws, as well as against others, the occasions are almost infinite in which the legislative power might justly interfere. To begin with the two great articles of life and health. Are these a man's own? Commonly speaking, and as far as they regard our fellow creatures, they are so. No man

has a natural right to deprive us of, or do violence to, either. But what others may not do, may we ourselves do? The gloomy and despondent suicide acts certainly as if he was sure his life was his own. Yet, comparatively with the great mass of mankind, how few are so desperate. Upon calculation, they would scarce be allowed now to make an exception. I say now, for I would not place to the account those who, before the light of revelation, destroyed themselves upon principle. This was one of the wild errors which men fell into, under the system of what they chose to call natural religion; when their religion was not strictly natural, but the fabric of their own brains. They were Gentiles; they were without the law; so without the law they will be judged hereafter. But, as I am addressing Christians, so I would be held to speak of Christian countries in particular, and therefore have ventured to assert, that in such, the instances of suicide (though at all events too frequent) are scarce so many, comparatively, as to form an exception to the general opinion, that

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SERM. XI. our own lives are not at our own disposal. But as I do not know that there is any abatement in the troubles and distresses to which human life is naturally liable, the question we proposed seems to be decided by a fact, namely, the concurrent testimony of by far the greater part of mankind*.

I would assert, therefore, that in Christian countries life is generally, I might almost say universally, held not to be at our own disposal; neither health, of course, on which life at present depends. But if this be so, do men take no unwarrantable

* I do not know that any *argument in defence of suicide* has ever increased the number of these desperate acts. The antients could regard suicide as an act of greatness and magnanimity. This might be some encouragement, and supersede all need of argument; but I believe no modern has succeeded in his attempts to *prove* the lawfulness of it. The wit and eloquence of Hume, I apprehend, have in no one instance whatsoever, removed a doubt that existed previous to the perusal of his works. They may have had, perhaps, the baneful and horrible effect of confirming and encouraging a pre-disposition to such madness.

liberties,

liberties, when they presume to act as they will by their lives and their health, endangering both unnecessarily, actually throwing them away, if not violently destroying them? Life must depend on health, and who knows not that health is essentially injured by many acts of immorality? There is one deliberate act common among the higher classes of society, in which life itself is made the stake, and wantonly and wilfully exposed to a chance the most precarious. It is offered, we are told, as the price of honor! as that which, from its high value, can only be put in competition with it. Perhaps, men so proud of their honor, might be brought to their senses, if they could once be persuaded of a very simple fact, that they have no such price to offer; it is none of their own; they pretend to riches which do not belong to them. Life is a trust; it is not property; it never was given; it is only lent; in the other world it will be a gift, when we shall be no longer liable to abuse it. Now, why will not these men, so jealous of their honor, consider a little

of

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of the consistency of their doings? To shew that they are above all deceit and dishonesty, they first claim a power over what they have no right to, a property in what never was given to them; they betray a trust, insult a Benefactor, besides, perhaps, a hundred collateral injuries, which they do, in the ruin of families and distress of friends. The duellist may think he is a man of honor, but no man is intrinsically less so. Perhaps great good might arise, in this particular instance, from our learning to have just notions of the tenure by which we hold our lives; for if once life is put out of our power, as the price of honor, honor will be no longer redeemable when once lost, and therefore will never be exposed upon such frivolous occasions, as it now too often is; it may also well deserve some consideration, how far those may be held to have any real regard to honor, who can look upon any thing as competent to redeem the forfeiture of it. It is a contradiction to pretend to prefer honor before life, while we make a parade of *offering* our lives as an adequate price for

for the redemption of our honor; for it must be remembered, that in such cases life is not surrendered to save our honor, but the latter being under suspicion, the mere exposure of our lives to a very uncertain chance, is thought sufficient to remove all stain and imputation. This is, in reality, rating honor very low; and he might reasonably be looked upon as the most honorable man who should so act, as if no price could redeem its loss, who, as long as his own conscience acquitted him, should hold himself above all suspicion; for, disgrace can never affect the man, who is conscious that he does not deserve it. There may be some heroism in despising an undeserved reproach, but to submit one's honor to a decision which can have no real effect in determining the merits of the case, is a fallacy and deception, which a truly honorable man should feel himself superior to. I have said this act of madness is generally confined to the higher classes of society, but in a different shape we have seen it, I am sorry to say, revived among

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among the lower classes also; and notwithstanding the vigilance of the magistracy, we hear continually of contests taking place, similar in profligacy, and yet perhaps worse in their more immediate causes, and even less excusable. In the one case, it is a wounded honor, that is *held* to *need vindication*, and some allowance must be made, for irritated passions, and offended innocence, but in the other case, honor (a most base honor indeed) is the prize to be contended for, nay not all the prize, sordid gain of money has its share; for these is life exposed. Life, which is not our own, is deliberately endangered to purchase the applause of the very lowest of mankind, to say nothing of other objects, too trivial to be spoken of in a place like this. Thus rashly do men deal with what is not their own, in the wilful and unnecessary exposure of their lives; and these things happen almost every day. But, though it may seem more remote, the liberties we take with our lives, through a wanton

wanton abuse of health, is not less irra- SERM. XI.
tional, or more to be defended. There are many excesses men run into, the certain effects of which are well known to be, the positive destruction of health, and a premature bringing on of decay and decrepitude. Because it does not happen that life is apparently brought into immediate danger by every single act of intemperance, we are heedless of remote consequences. But since life is now known to be a state of trial, it should be considered as a post of duty we have to maintain, and which we have no right to abandon till we have a regular dismissal from him who placed us in it. If the fabric of our mortal bodies is so constructed as that by care and management they may reasonably be expected to last "*threescore years and ten*," so much we may conceive to be the common term assigned for our trial and probation, and what right can we have to abridge it? But, if by intemperance and excesses we hasten the termination of life, undoubtedly we in effect do withdraw from our post, contrary to the original will and design of him

SERM. XI. him who appointed the common limits of human life. It matters not when we destroy life, if we do but unnecessarily hasten its destruction. Besides, it is not allowable to think, that life is not always exposed to danger, in every act of excessive indulgence; surely many have been known to die in the midst of their pleasures; many have been as suddenly hurried out of life by the intoxicating bowl, and other gross irregularities, as by the sword of the duellist, or the murderous arm of the suicide. Great is the error then, and most dangerous the mistake, of fancying our health and our lives to be our own; of which, as we have no account to render here, we can have none to render elsewhere; indeed of no two things, perhaps, shall we have a more formidable account to render; since, as it has been shewn, the wanton abuse, and deliberate exposure of either, are connected with some of the foulest crimes, and most disgusting immoralities.

Time is another thing which men are too apt to fancy to be their own: it is, in truth,

truth, but another name for life, and therefore needs not much of our consideration here; for time is only that by which life is measured, nevertheless as we may not destroy life abruptly, so long as ever it lasts we are bound not to make an ill use of it. God has placed us in a scene of action, where much is to be daily done, both for our own advancement and the good of others. The employment of our time, therefore, is never a matter of indifference; nor is it *our own*; we have no unlimited command at all over it; for every moment of it we are responsible: it should all be devoted to good actions; only the interval naturally assigned to sleep should be suffered to pass without either some useful exertion of the body, or rational exercise of the mind. But if this be so, and so of a truth it is, how many will have an account to render of which they little think at present. Here the poor are better off than the rich; the value of time is better known to them; their daily bread must be procured by daily labour, and labour occupies their time; they are secure from the

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the reach of many temptations, because they have no time on their hands which they can afford either to lose or to waste. Nevertheless, if the rich are more exposed to the danger of wasting and squandering, and misapplying their time, in the case of the poor it may be attended with worse consequences here below; above, both will be brought to the same bar; but, as the world is constituted at present, a rich man may be idle without much detriment to others; if he does not employ his time ill, he becomes only insignificant, and not injurious. But an *idle poor* man cannot live, without having recourse to some practices disgraceful to himself, and hurtful to others; he must starve, or steal, or live upon the precarious bounty of others; those who depend upon him, as they must needs lose the aid and support he ought to supply, must either do the same, or sink into despondency, and perish through want. Can it be supposed that time should have been allotted to a man, as a thing to be left entirely at his own disposal, when consequences so dreadful to others may flow from

from his wanton abuse of it? And this naturally enough leads to another consideration in regard to the general error of thinking things to be our own, when in strictness they are not so: a man's family and houshold are often thought to be so much his own, that the management and conduct of them are submitted entirely to his direction; but even these are all trusts; they are talents, delivered into our hands by our Maker, for the use or abuse of which we shall finally be called to answer. When it is as much a truth in nature, as by Revelation, that if we are careful to train up a child in the way he should go, it is likely that, when he is old, he will not depart from that good course that has been taught him, must we not expect to be called to an account for the method in which we bring up our children? When so much may depend on our neglect, can we imagine God would have put moral beings so much into a state of dependence one upon another, without interposing some check or control? The mischief that befel the house of Eli, was, as God himself tells us, for

SERM. XI. for this especial reason inflicted: because, "*his sons* made themselves vile, and *he re-* "*strained them not**." If there is any thing for which we shall be responsible hereafter, surely it will be for this. For, let us remember, that though those so subjected to us by the course of nature, are not so much our own as that we may attend to, or neglect them as we please, yet they are unquestionably, for wise ends, meant to be in a state of relative dependence; and, therefore, it becomes an absolute and positive duty, on our part, not to lead them astray, not to suffer them, for want of instruction, to fall through ignorance, or from the influence of our bad examples, to wander from the right way. It was not Abraham's own righteousness alone which recommended him to the especial notice and choice of God, but the assurance that he would direct and "*com-* "*mand his children and his houshold after* "*him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do* "*judgment and justice.*" Indeed it may well

* 1 Sam. iii. 13.

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be questioned whether the apparent property we may seem to have in our children, by the laws and course of nature, be not effectually forfeited by our neglect to breed them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; for, as it is a command of God, that children should honor their father and mother, this commandment must needs imply a previous conduct on the part of the parents to act by their children so as to deserve the name of parents *in the sight of God:* but how can those be thought to deserve honor and reverence, who by neglect, or ill example, or ill advice, shall have suffered their children to run into all manner of excesses to the loss and destruction of both their souls and bodies? It is the same with other relations. The holy Apostle Paul exhorts servants to be obedient "*to their masters in the flesh;*" but he takes care to shew what masters he considers deserving of this obedience:— "*And ye masters do the same things unto* "*them,* (that is, "*with good will do them* "*service,*" and so forth, as the context expresses it) "*forbearing threatening,*" "*knowing,*" SERM. XI.

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"*ing*," he adds, with singular propriety, "*that* your *master also is in Heaven*," or in other words, knowing that if they should seem here to be absolutely dependent upon you, yet at least you yourselves are entirely as dependent upon, and quite as accountable to, God. But, perhaps, in no instance, is the pretence of property more abused than in our usage of the dumb animals that come into our possession. These, having no power of remonstrance, no means at all of appeal, are in every instance whatsoever treated just as the temper and disposition of their proprietors happens to direct. Some, possibly, may fall into the hands of merciful and kind masters, and if they acquire no addition of comforts in reward of their services, may yet, perhaps, not be compelled to any unnecessary or unreasonable labour. If they contribute "*to tread out the corn*," they have their share of it in the end, and are not "*muzzled*," that they may not eat; but, for one merciful, how many cruel masters are there to be met with? How many treat the brute creatures, subject to them, without

out the least possible regard to their feelings. Can you imagine or suppose, those harmless, uncomplaining animals have no friend to take their part? Can you conceive that a good and gracious God, who alike gave being to all things on the face of the earth, can behold such inhumanity and cruelty without displeasure? Remember, for no doubt it is true, that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without his regard. God is the friend of those dumb animals, we are told so in holy writ; "*He* "*giveth them fodder,*" by the seasonable supply of grass and corn; he feedeth the young ravens in their way; he feedeth all the fowls of the air, without their having the care and anxiety that we have, of sowing, or reaping, or gathering into barns. Depend upon it all that we see of their sufferings here by the hands of man, will one day or other be set to rights; we know not how, but this at all events we may be sure of, God never suffers them to come into our possession to be wantonly abused and ill treated, but he requires mercy at our hands, and though we never may

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form to ourselves any right idea of the compensation that may be in store for them, yet we may be sure that punishment will be in store for those who pay no regard to their pains and pleasures. "*The "righteous man,*" says Solomon, and none are truly righteous that can do otherwise, "*regardeth the life of his beast.*" It may be asked in the end, but are not our worldly goods our own? No, not always to do as we will with them: worldly goods, however acquired, are but talents intrusted to our care; if we do no good with them, we in effect hide them in a napkin, as is represented of the unprofitable servant in the parable; treasures on earth so badly administered, will merit no treasures in lieu of them, in Heaven; they will be taken from us at our death, and in no shape restored to us in the world to come. If we *misapply* our worldly substance, if, like the heedless and incautious prodigal, we waste it in riotous living, or other gross and immoral excesses, we must needs comprehend what the consequences will be. Our sumptuous fare and purple clothing,

ing, will be exchanged for weeping and gnashing of teeth. The poor, and the frugal, and the temperate, will exchange conditions with us in the last day; then *they* "shall be comforted," and *we* "tormented." Prodigality often involves the innocent in its cruel consequences; for few are so destitute of relatives and dependents, as not to have others besides themselves to provide for; a neglect, which St. Paul does not scruple to say, amounts to a denial of the Christian faith; nay, is even worse than infidelity itself *. Upon this head of worldly possessions it must also be obvious, that what should be appropriated to the just payment of debts cannot be *our's* by any right whatever. SERM. XI.

It is impossible to conclude without one further application of the words of my text. Are you Christians? Do you believe or profess yourselves to be so? If you are, in no sense of the expression are you any longer your own. You are redeemed with

* 1 Tim. v. 8.

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a price, purchased with a ransom. Christ laid down his life for you, and you are his. Now you cannot be at a loss to know what obligations this lays upon you. Every time you would act contrary to his word and will, you, without any right, presume to follow only the devices and desires of your own hearts. Your *own* hearts then alone they may be called, for Christ cannot acknowledge them to be any longer devoted to him. Nevertheless, as to the right of thinking them your own, it can only be founded on a foul act of disloyalty and ingratitude; if you will not be of Christ, Christ will not dwell with you; it is but fit you should be delivered over then to your own hearts' lusts; but let me beseech of you to learn of St. Peter the consequences of such foul apostacy: "*If,*" says he, "*after ye have escaped the pol-*
"*lutions of the world, through the know-*
"*ledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus*
"*Christ, ye are again entangled therein,*
"*and overcome; the latter end will be*
"*worse with you than the beginning; for*
"*it had been better for you not to have*
"*known*

" *known the way of righteousness, than after* SERM.
" *ye have known it, to turn from the holy* XI.
" *commandment delivered unto you.*"

To conclude; what I have said above is expressly the language of holy Scripture. Through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and his precious death and burial, and his atonement for our sins made on the cross, we are become the children of God by adoption, as we were originally by creation. Surely you cannot be ignorant of this: " *What!*" says St. Paul, to the Christians of old, and it may well and with equal animation be asked of the professed Christians of this day, " *know ye*
" *not that your body is the temple of the Holy*
" *Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of*
" *God, and ye are not your own? for ye are*
" *bought with a price. Therefore, glorify*
" *God in your body, and in your spirit, which*
" *are God's**!"

* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

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SERMON XII.

A FUNERAL SERMON *.

ECCLES XXII. 11.

Weep for the dead, for he hath lost the light; and weep for the fool, for he wanteth understanding: make little weeping for the dead, for he is at rest; but the life of the fool is worse than death.

HERE are two directions, the one limiting the other. "*Weep for the dead:*" this is natural, and exceedingly consonant to our most common feelings.— "*Make little weeping for the dead;*" this is a direction depending upon circumstances, and requiring some consideration to reconcile us to it. However, the wise author of the book in which these two directions occur has not left us to seek for a reason for his precepts; in both cases he has expressed the

* Preached at the request and in the presence of the surviving widower and family.

reason.

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reason. "*Weep for the dead,*"—Why?—"*for,*" saith he, "*he hath lost the light.*" "*Make little weeping for the dead,*" and why? "*for he is at rest.*" The text contains more than this, which we shall consider hereafter; at present, let us confine ourselves to the two injunctions already mentioned: first, that we "*weep for the dead;*" and, secondly, that we "*make but little weeping for the dead.*" And first, to "*weep for the dead*" is very natural indeed, for we are of course left behind to bewail their loss. Whatever is become of them, of this we are certain, that henceforward we shall know no comfort from their society, nor reap any advantage from their aid and assistance. They are gone, and have left this troublesome world; and, alas! have left us to struggle through the difficulties of it, unfriended and alone. Much, perhaps, may we have to look back upon, of affection and endearment, which softened all the sorrows, and smoothed all the troubles of life; much of care and kindness, flowing from friendship and long acquaintance, which

which no future commerce with the world can renew or repay. We shall have to look back upon scenes of happiness and tranquillity, which can never now be restored to us but in the realms above, where we shall possibly again meet with those we have lost, to part no more! He, therefore, who gave us this direction, to "*weep* "*for the dead,*" knew much of the condition and circumstances of human nature; for, indeed, there can be no greater trial put in our way than that very one of supporting, as we should do, the loss of those whose friendship, and whose presence, were above all things in the world essential to our happiness. But let us consider the reason of this injunction, "*Weep for the dead,* "*for they have lost the light.*" This is, in fact, a consideration that perhaps affects *us* more than them. They have lost the light of this world, but then possibly they have gained the light of that which is above. However, as the wise man gives it as a reason "for weeping for them," let us consider it as such. And first, they have certainly lost the light; their eyes are closed in

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in darkness. The sun no more rises upon them; they are "*gone to the grave, and* "*shall come up no more.*" If, indeed, they have passed through this life becomingly and well, it is rather for ourselves that we should weep; but yet, at all events, we should feel an awe about their future condition, which should throw a solemnity over our sorrows. They are now, as it were, on the way to their judge. All opportunity of setting aright what has been amiss, is past and gone; and such as they have been here, such must they appear at the tribunal of Christ. Thus have they lost the light as to themselves; as to *us*, they are taken away from our sight and our acquaintance; we shall know no more about them till the great day of the Lord. The body we have with us, but the soul is with its Creator. If we have been befriended by their kindness, soothed by their care, comforted by their help, or cheered by their society, surely gratitude will move us to weep for their loss, and to lament that such should be the condition of our mortal nature, that friends must separate, the dearest

est connections be dissolved, the closest ties broken, and that no hopes or wishes, no request or prayers, can arrest the hand of death. But if there is so much occasion, and so much reason for "*weeping for the* "*dead,*" surely the other injunction of my text is the more worth attending to; for weeping and grieving are very painful and distressing; and as they bring no remedy in this case for the evil that is the subject of them, should be moderated in every way possible. And therefore it is desirable that we should learn, that if it is ever reasonable to "*weep for the dead,*" it is yet as reasonable to "*make but little weeping for* "*them.*" Now the reason given for this precept is most important and most worthy of our consideration—"*Make little weeping* "*for the dead, for he is at rest:*" certainly, upon the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle, the dead are immediately at rest, as to all the troubles and disquietudes of this mortal life. But, generally speaking, we have no right to conclude that the dead are indiscriminately at rest. Those that "*die* "*in the Lord*" are so; we know upon the word

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word of God himself; they rest from their labours here, and their good works follow them to the judgment seat of Christ. Not so with the wicked; and therefore this precept must be received with limitations, and perhaps the remainder of the text may admirably serve us to point out this distinction; but let us rather dwell now upon the hope of the righteous. They, when they die, are indeed at rest; all their earthly cares and sorrows at an end for ever; they are, to apply a figure of speech peculiar to the Scriptures, in "*Abraham's* "*bosom*," carried thither perhaps unseen to us, by the angels and ministers of God. We do not know this from reason, but we know it from the word of God. Reason cannot in fact tell us more than we see; that the dissolution of this our earthly tabernacle ends our existence here; but through the Gospel of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, the immortality of the soul has been brought to light; and we now are assured, upon the promise of God himself, exemplified in the resurrection of our blessed Lord, that at the end of the world

"*the*

" *the dead shall be raised incorruptible,*" and all " *they that have done good shall come* " *forth,*" from the dark and dreary grave, to " *the resurrection of life,*"—of life eternal; in the realms above, in the presence of God; where there shall be " *fulness of* " *joy, and pleasures for evermore.*" We ought in reason then to moderate our grief for those that " *die in the Lord,*" assured that, in regard to them, death has no sting, nor over them shall the grave obtain a victory. We should not " *sorrow, as those* " *without hope,*" but rather rejoice that they are removed from this scene of care and anxiety, and have found rest to their souls. Having thus briefly treated of those two leading precepts of the text, that have respect to the sorrow we ought to express for those that are removed from us by death, I shall proceed to the remainder of my text, which no doubt is pregnant with instruction. " *Weep for the dead, for he* " *hath lost the light, and weep for the fool,* " *for he wanteth understanding.*" The dead is out of the way of all opportunity of repairing what is amiss; the fool is so unwise

SERM. XII. wise as not to avail himself of any, though he is alive to do it. He "*wanteth under-*
"*standing,*" though every thing is at hand to convince him of the lapse of time, and the frailty of all sublunary things; yet cannot he get discernment enough to learn "*so to number his days,*" as "*to apply his*
"*heart unto wisdom.*" It is, generally speaking, therefore, more reasonable to weep for the fool that is living, than for the wise that are dead; for as my text further expresses it, "*the life of the fool is worse than*
"*death.*" But what then is this folly that is worse than death? Surely it is the folly of not providing, as we should do, against the stroke of death. And what can contribute more to the correction of such folly, than such an awful and solemn sight as is now before us? The fool in holy writ is he who trusteth too much to the things of this world. To riches or honor, power or fame. Now what becomes of these at the hour of death? Is not every thing brought to the same end? Is not the scene before us applicable to all alive? There is but one lesson to be learnt from it, namely, that

that except virtue and true religion, nothing in this world is to be depended upon as a security against the stroke of death. By death, strength is brought low; beauty consumed; power dissolved; riches scattered; wit silenced; the prince can no more avoid it than the peasant; the rich than the poor; nor yet to any certainty, the young more than the aged; for the arrows of death are always flying abroad, and what can ward them off, or hide us from them? Death overcomes us as easily in the fenced city, as in the open hamlet; in the bosom of our friends, as in the midst of our enemies; in the crowded street, as in the howling wilderness; on dry land as on the wide sea; in the moment of mirth and joy, as in the hour of darkness and dismay. Such a scene as that now before us, should make rather a stronger impression, or at least give greater warning to the *young* and *gay* and *dissipated*, than to the aged and infirm. The latter will probably have been wise enough to gather instruction from the gradual decay of nature, and to have put themselves into

a course

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a course of religious preparation for that awful hour, which, though it may not be nearer to them, than to many much younger around them, cannot in the course of things be very far from them.—To them such scenes as these, if they have been so wise as I have described, may rather raise than depress their spirits; since the Gospel of Jesus Christ has opened to us a view of the future state prepared for us. They will regard the lifeless corpse, as a burthen laid aside, which confined the soul to a scene unfit for it; they will rather feel a longing desire themselves to put off their earthly tabernacle of clay, to be clothed upon with the celestial body prepared for them, and to be admitted to the presence of their Maker. They will contemplate such a scene, with a pious hope that their deceased friends are only removed to a state of rest and happiness, a little before them; that it is their turn to follow soon, and then they may again be united, in a state infinitely more desirable, abounding in all rational delight, and free from all corroding cares. But the young should regard

regard a scene like this with peculiar awe and consideration; it is seldom that death appears so near to them, as in fact it always is; they are too likely to pass from such sights with a careless confidence that *their* hour is remote, and that they may have many years to come of mirth and pleasure, before it becomes a duty to fit themselves for such an end; but the folly of such inconsiderate minds is "*worse than death.*" We should rather weep for those liable to fall into such dangerous mistakes, as the text directs, than for those who have died in mature age, after having been brought to a sense of their weakness and infirmities. What a change is it for the young to be arrested in the midst of their vain delights, and with all their follies on their head to descend to the grave of death! Yet the instances of this are many and frequent, and therefore it amounts to an unquestionable truth, that the apprehension of death should make a stronger impression on the young than on the old. The old may look to it, as a rest from their labours, but upon the young it may come as a thief in the night,

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unawares and unexpected; and if they have neglected all improvement of their minds, and all preparation for eternity, may end all their pleasures here, not to be renewed or compensated in the life to come. Such occasions as the present, therefore, to have their full effect, should be considered in different points of view. While every consolation that can be drawn from them should be laid before the afflicted, to cheer and comfort them under their heavy weight of sorrow, every warning and instruction that they can afford to the inconsiderate and thoughtless, should also be insisted on. It is of no account to number the years of the friend departed; we all stand on the same precipice. The youngest person among us may be the next subject of all these mournful rites, so precarious and uncertain is this mortal life. But to have proof of the precariousness of our present state, is but a small use to be derived from such scenes as these, because, however dull men may be in discerning this great truth, there is nothing which is more notorious, or more obvious

to

to common apprehension. But there is another great use to be drawn from the scene before us. Either we are now committing to the dust the body of a miserable sinner, or of a fellow-creature who perhaps has set us an example, which, if we would wish to be partakers of God's heavenly kingdom, we should do well to follow. It is not a thing becoming the place I am speaking from, to go a step beyond the truth; but yet I think I see reason to speak with some confidence of the virtues of her whose loss we now deplore. There are those present to pay respect to her memory, whose very presence and lamentations afford proof enough that in some of the first and highest duties of human life, she so acquitted herself as to merit the esteem, the love, and affection of such as were dependent upon her care and attention, in those most essential points. If we have now to commit to the ground the remains of a faithful and affectionate wife, a fond and careful mother, and, above all, a sober and pious Christian, as appears manifestly to be the case, we need enquire no

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SERM. XII. further; these are virtues which will ascend to heaven as memorials in her behalf, and we may feel already assured that she is in possession of a crown of righteousness, or so well certified that it is in store for her, that her soul is in peace, and full of hope and joy.

In the book of Revelations, a mysterious book in general, yet abounding in such interesting displays of a future state, as that we might well receive it, on this account alone, as a book of divine authority, there are such descriptions of the happiness prepared for the righteous, as may serve both to comfort those who have to deplore the loss of friends, as to animate the most unconcerned to apply their minds to the cultivation of such virtues as may enable them to become partakers of the bliss so pictured forth for their encouragement. Among other descriptions, perhaps the following is as striking as any.—" *There shall be no more* " *death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain ;* for " *the former things* are *passed away ; they* " *shall hunger no more, neither thirst any* " *more.*

" *more. But the Lamb which is in the midst* SERM.
" *of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead* XII.
" *them unto living fountains of water,* and
" *God shall wipe away all tears from their*
" *eyes.*" Though here is no great display or parade of the *glories* of heaven, yet what can be more calculated to sooth and comfort us under any afflictions of life, than to be assured of such a fact, that there is a state attainable by all of us, where sorrow, and pain, and care shall no more disturb us?—that there is a merciful and compassionate Redeemer, always standing ready before the throne of God, to plead for the pardon and forgiveness of the humble and contrite sinner; ready, by the application of his own exalted merits, to blot out all our iniquities, and wipe away all our tears, whether they be those of sorrow or repentance?—

To conclude—The scene before us is awful and solemn. It may seem as if some were more concerned in it than others, but it is not really so. We are all equally concerned in this evidence of the frailty of human

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human life, the manifest dissolution of the body, the hopes and expectations awaiting the immortal soul. Let each of us apply to ourselves the instruction we stand in need of; nor let so great and solemn an occasion pass away without its proper impression. While we weep for the dead because they have lost the light, let us bewail the condition of the fool who, refusing to be admonished by the continual instances of mortality that occur, hath not understanding enough to turn away in time from the wickedness that he hath committed, to save his soul alive; while we manifest a confidence in the gracious promises of our crucified Redeemer, by making but *little* weeping for the dead, in the hope that they are passed on to the rest that is prepared for the people of God, let us reflect, that the life of the fool, (that is, of the inconsiderate and irreligious man) is worse than death: that all the mournful and gloomy appendages of this solemn service for the dead, are nothing in comparison with the land of darkness, and shadow of death, to which the wicked man is hastening.

hastening. Let us remember what, though it is the warning of an Apostle, is so obvious to reason, as scarcely to need so sacred an authority; that "all that is in the "world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust "of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not "of the Father, but is of the world—and "the world passeth away, and the lust "thereof; but *he* that *doeth the will of God,* "*abideth for ever.*"—1 John ii. 16, 17. SERM. XII.

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ON THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS.

ECCLESIASTICUS XXVII. 6.

The fruit declareth if the tree have been dressed.

THE conclusion of the verse is, "*so is* "*the utterance of a conceit in the heart of a* "*man*;" which, whether it is rightly rendered, or we have the original correct or not, admits surely, as it stands, of a very reasonable interpretation, and may pass as a just illustration of the foregoing figure. As the fruit declareth the condition of the tree, so conversation commonly discovers the intentions and disposition of the heart of man*. But the comparison may with great propriety be extended to every part of a man's conduct. All our actions flow

* Compare Matt. xii, 34, 35, Luke vi. 45.

from

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from principles within us, as the fruit has its flavor from the juices of the tree. Our blessed Lord adopts the same figure; (Matt. vii. 15, &c. Matt. xii. 33,) though it may be doubtful how he meant exactly to apply it, in the case of the false prophets to whom he alludes in the first passage. Generally speaking, however, it is a beautiful and apt comparison, as applied to the outward actions of man, and as it stands, in the words of my text, may reasonably be submitted to your more particular consideration. We read in Scripture of the *fruits* of the Spirit, and we have them distinctly enumerated by St. Paul: they are, "*love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance**;" or else summed up more concisely by the same Apostle in another place, "*the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth*†." That is, (if there is any sense at all in these expressions) such are the virtues naturally springing from a well-disciplined heart,

* Galatians, v. 22, 23. † Eccles. v. 9.

co-operating

co-operating with the influence of God's holy Spirit. Without entering at present too far into the controversy about faith and works, rendered intricate without necessity through mens' perverse prejudices; surely it must be admitted that the holy Apostle St. Paul, when he speaks of the different fruits of the flesh and the Spirit, in his several writings, meant to make some great distinction between good and bad men, whether they were nominally Christians or not. In writing, generally, to the Galatian converts, who had been already baptised into the faith, he would have wasted his time greatly in dwelling so much on the several virtues and vices he there enumerates, had the Christian convert stood in any situation which should render him indifferent to the distinction between good and evil. And the whole controversy, about the final efficacy of works, might, I should think, be laid to rest, if we could once be brought to agree that in some way or other they are essential to the character of a true Christian. In the same chapter where St. Paul enu-

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merates the fruits of the Spirit, he also reckons up the several corrupt fruits of the flesh, and he subjoins the consequences of indulging in them ; " *they which do such* " *things shall not inherit the kingdom of* " *God.*" If this does not directly imply that they which do not do such things, *shall* inherit the kingdom of God, it does, at least, most expressly imply, that they which do not do such things, stand a much better chance of inheriting God's kingdom. And whence can this better chance arise, but that the mere abstaining from such foul iniquities has some meritorious effect or other? But the opposition is not merely between those who do such works of unrighteousness, and those who do them not, but between the workers of iniquity and those who sedulously cultivate the fruits of the Spirit; merely to abstain from wickedness would seem to afford something of a better chance, but to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit is put in direct opposition to the fulfilling the lusts of the flesh; and, therefore, as the latter is expressly said to operate to our exclusion from the kingdom

kingdom of Heaven, surely the former must be admitted to have some share in securing our admission; and the share they have in this might really be rendered as intelligible as possible if men would but be content not to run to extremes. If good works do *something* towards our salvation, is it necessary to insist that this cannot be, unless they do *all?* So, if the grace of God is represented as indispensably necessary, must this imply that man is quite excluded from any co-operation? Let us recur for a moment to the comparison of my text, "*The fruit declareth if the* "*tree have been dressed.*"

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Is it not certain that the fruits of the earth are improvable by the labour, care, and attention of the husbandman? Is it not certain that what is placed in such circumstances by the providence of God, as to be productive and profitable through care and good management, may, through mismanagement and neglect, become wholly useless and unproductive? Shall we be so absurd as to say, that because the seed could not

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not grow, nor the fruit come to maturity, without God had provided for such a circulation of juices and conversion of substances as should conduce thereto, that therefore the care of the husbandman was wholly superseded, and of no account at all? If it pleased God, he could make the corn to grow as freely as the sterile weed, or he could make the sterile weed as serviceable and as precious as the corn; but even in these things he has made a difference, and seems of his especial grace and goodness not only to have permitted, but to have invited man to co-operate with him in his acts of Providence: nevertheless the comparison we ought to make even in these subordinate concerns, should serve to repress all improper arrogance, and all pretence of self-sufficiency. For what after all is the labour *we* bestow, to the operations of nature, ever fulfilling the designs of God? We can dress the tree, and manure the field, and reasonably look to some good effects to flow from such attentions; but who but God can give any real effect to such operations? who but God could ordain

ordain that such cares should meliorate the soil, or improve the fruit, by an introduction of fresh juices? Here God may surely be said to do all in some sense, because, without his providential pre-disposition of circumstances, all we could do would avail nothing; but yet man does something, because, without dressing the tree, or manuring the field, though we can never oppose the course of God's providence, or alter the plan and purpose of his laws; yet we may put ourselves in the way of receiving more abundant benefits therefrom. Though, as the Apostle argues, 1 Cor. iii. when "*Paul*" had "*planted*," and "*Apollos* "*watered*," God only could "*give the in-* "*crease*," and therefore the planting and watering were really of no effect without the further influence of God's grace; yet the planting of Paul, and the watering of Apollos, might be the occasion, and particular subject, of the divine interposition, and therefore necessary thereto as motives or conditions of God's own appointment. Can any thing be more express than the Apostle's own words? ver. 7, "*Neither is* "*he* SERM. XIII.

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" *he that planteth any thing, nor he that wa-*
" *tereth; but God that giveth the increase;*" but yet he adds, ver. 8, " *Every man shall* " *receive his own reward according to his own* " *labour;*" not because his labour is meritorious independent of God's grace, but because, says he, " *we are labourers toge-* " *ther with God.*" The waters of *Jordan* were efficacious to the recovery of *Naaman* as a means sanctioned by God's especial appointment; as such they had a virtue peculiar to them; a positive virtue, however dependent on the grace of God, else as *Naaman* himself would have reasoned, why should not those of *Abana* and *Pharpar*, in his own country of *Damascus*, have done as well *? We are taught by the Holy Scriptures to look upon the labour to which man is doomed in the cultivation of his fields, to be a punishment for sin: it is strange then that any should regard such endeavours as we make to " *work out our own salvation,*" as a *presumption* on our part, and hateful in the sight of God. The necessity of good

* 2 Kings v. 12.

works

works might stand upon its proper ground, if, instead of considering them as necessary to our salvation in the way of merit, we should consider them as necessary, as a just acknowledgment of the corruption of our nature. And here also the analogy would hold good; for though labour be a curse, the Almighty still makes a distinction in the common course of his providence. The field of the slothful will never yield such an abundant crop as that of the frugal and industrious; and therefore let us rate the value of good works as low as we please; yet that in the great business of our salvation, they may operate to our advantage, is consistent with what we daily see before our eyes, in the prosperous success of the diligent man, though labour was originally denounced as a curse. In short, let us only avoid extremes, and I think it is not possible to conceive that the Christian can hope to reap the blessed fruits of Christ's Gospel, without the recommendation of a good moral life. And whenever we see the course of God's Providence so changed, as that the possessions of the

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negligent and slothful, shall yield as much, and afford the same harvest as those of the careful and industrious, then it will be worth while perhaps to enquire whether the saving effects of God's grace may not be as liberally awarded to the sinner as to the good and upright man. Much mischief has arisen in the discussion of this important point (and scarcely, perhaps, so much upon any other question), from an injudicious selection of detached passages of Scripture, and, therefore, I would not follow the example of selecting any detached passages to prove my own assertions, were there not some so strong and so worded, as to admit of no other sense: thus, how could the Apostle to the Hebrews, speak of the reward of those who, "*by patient continuance in well-doing*, should "*seek for glory and honour, and immortality*," if a patient continuance in well-doing was not in some way or other a recommendation to those rewards? How could the Apostle St. Paul, in writing to the Colossians, where he urges them to give thanks to the Father for having "*made them meet*

"*to*

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" *to be partakers of the inheritance of the* " *saints in light,*" tell them, he never ceased to pray for them that they " *should be fruit-* " *ful in every good work,*" if they could be perfectly fit to be partakers of the inheritance of heaven without? Why again in his Epistle to the Philippians, whom he expressly acknowledges to be united with him in " *the fellowship of the Gospel,*" ver. v. ch. 1, does he also profess to make daily prayers for their advancement in moral righteousness, that they " *may approve* " *things that are excellent, be sincere, and* " *without offence;*" and that they " *be filled* " *with the fruits of righteousness,*" if these virtues were not of some real and actual importance to their characters as Christians? But if good works can be of any importance, (as in the two latter cases), *after* God has " *made us meet to be partakers* " *of the heavenly inheritance,*" by " *trans-* " *lating us into the kingdom of his dear son,*" Col. i. 12, 13; and *after* our being admitted " *into the fellowship of Christ's Gospel,*" then I would contend that they are indispensably necessary, however little they

SERM. XIII. may contribute towards our eternal salvation; for if they are not necessary, it would have been impertinent in the Apostle to have prayed for such graces in behalf of his converts of Colosse and Philippi, after acknowledging that they already stood in the situation of true servants of the blessed Jesus. Let them contribute ever so little to our salvation, I still maintain, that if they contribute any thing, they are of *indispensable* necessity. So small and insignificant a thing as a carpenter's nail, may be of indispensable necessity to the safety of the largest and most capacious ship that sails, not because it is beyond the power of God to support the vessel on the waves of the sea, though that nail were absent, but because it has pleased God so to order matters, that in the common course of things, the absence of that one small nail might leave an opening for the admission of the waters, to the sinking of the ship. We have no more cause to *glory in our good works* indeed, or to depend solely upon them, than to glory in, or rely entirely upon, our bodily labours in the field—the

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latter may be absolutely necessary to the reaping the harvest we desire, and stand in need of; but after all it is God that giveth the increase. To pretend to any exclusive merit on the score of good works, would be as absurd as for him who dressed the tree to pretend to be the fabricator of the very substance of the fruit it produces; whereas he may reasonably approve his own care and prudence, if he has so corrected the juices of an austere fruit, as to make it more fit to be gathered and preserved, than to be severed from the stock, and cast into the fire. The commonest husbandman of us all would make no mistakes in this particular, and yet in point of analogy, I can scarce discern a single difference or distinction in the two questions before us. It matters nothing through what motive we are good and virtuous upon Christian principles. If only gratitude towards Christ is expected to incline us to practise good works, yet if they are admitted to be a test of gratitude, gratitude towards Christ is surely indispensably becoming, and good works of course equally so.

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so. It is truly very strange that it could ever have been made a question whether good works are necessary or not; and I would almost venture to say, that from the whole tenor of Scripture every man, gifted with common sense, would have judged them to be necessary, had not the contrary doctrine tended to set us more at liberty in regard to our actions, and to present to us much easier terms of salvation than the constant practice of virtue and righteousness, to many people proves. But I would wish to draw another argument from my text. It is not, I know, strictly an Evangelical text, nor yet even an inspired one, but yet it is of very respectable authority, and appears to me to be perfectly consonant to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles. The comparison in my text expressly refers to the prudent care and management of the husbandman in regard to the product of his fields. "*The fruit declareth if the "tree have been dressed;*" it does not say, the fruit declareth whether it has received the benign influences of the sun, or has been watered by the rains from heaven; but

but whether it has been dressed, and received any help from the care of the husbandman. And this is so, I believe, in regard to all our moral actions. It will not be enquired whether God's grace has supernaturally purified our hearts, or the application of Christ's merit operated unconditionally to our entire justification, but whether, considering the gracious promises made to us of the help and cooperation of God's holy spirit, and the glorious hopes afforded us of reconciliation through the blood of Christ, we have so far done our part, as that these transcendent benefits may be applied to us. In all cases it would seem to have pleased God so to order matters, that man should do something to help himself; and those who are willing to set mankind free from the obligation of the works of righteousness, would act consistently if they were to endeavour to set them free also from manual labour. To pretend that to attach any merit at all to works of holiness is to derogate from the stupendous efficacy of Christ's atonement, is just as reasonable as to say, that to pretend

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pretend to cultivate the field is to derogate from the power of God, who in so marvellous and inexplicable a manner has prepared the soil for the growth of plants, and appointed the kindly influences of the sun and air, to bring them to maturity: in either case it would be folly to confound the two questions, for only one is necessary. We need not enquire whether God could accomplish the same ends without our co-operation. No one but an atheist would think of denying such a truism; but the question that alone concerns us is, whether it appears from Scripture that God meant to deal with us so unconditionally? Now I think it has been shewn, that in the visible order of things, it has pleased God to leave something for man to do, even to supply his bodily wants, and therefore surely we have good ground to conclude from analogy, that all his higher wants would not be supplied without some co-operation on the part of man. But the word of God is beyond all reasoning from analogy; and if that does not inculcate the constant practice of every virtue, and discountenance

countenance and condemn every vicious indulgence, there is no meaning in words. It is of no avail to lay such a stress, as some do, upon Christ's having shed his blood to save sinners; for he that is most righteous in obedience to God's laws, is perhaps most of any sensible of his imperfect endeavours, and therefore most ready to confess himself a sinner, so that he is in the way of salvation at all events. To pretend that we may be saved merely by the intrinsic merit of good works, is entirely a superstition of the Church of Rome, and has been already so exposed as scarcely any longer to demand our notice: but to expect to be saved without good works, or *without any hinderance from our evil doings*, is so to confound matters that scarce a single text of Scripture remains intelligible. To any that attempt to deceive us by such vain doctrines, St. James supplies us with an answer, which we should do well to adopt; "*shew me thy faith without thy works, and I* "*will shew thee my faith by my works.*" Undoubtedly none can prove that the practice of any virtue is discountenanced in Scripture,

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Scripture, or on the other hand that the indulgence of any vice is approved; therefore we may conclude with the Apostle, that in the practice of virtue we are secure thus far, that "*against such there is no law;*" whereas all impurity and immorality of every kind is particularly condemned in Scripture, and shewn to be in constant opposition to the spirit of God. Nor is it any where said that Christ will save sinners persisting in their sins, but that those sinners only shall "*save their souls alive,*" who, repenting of their past disobedience, shall "*turn away from the wickedness*" they have been in the habit of committing—not those who expect to be saved upon such easy terms as the Sadducees and Pharisees, who ran to partake of John's baptism, but those who adopt his admonition, and are careful in the conduct of their lives, "*to bring forth fruits meet for repentance;*" that is, to practise and cultivate such virtues as may manifest their sincere conversion, and their just abhorrence of all iniquity, so hateful in the sight of God.

And

And now to conclude—"*May the God of* "*Peace that brought again from the dead our* "*Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the* "*sheep, through the blood of the everlasting* "*covenant, make you perfect in every good* "*work, to do his will, working in you that* "*which is well pleasing in his sight, through* "*Jesus Christ: to whom, with the Father and* "*the Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is most due* "*all glory, might, majesty, and dominion, now* "*and ever.*"

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SERMON XIV.

ON GOOD WORKS.

ROMANS VI. 22, 23.

But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

OF all the motives which should actuate the Christian to lead a good life, that which ought to be the most efficacious and prevailing, is commonly altogether overlooked and neglected, or else made too much of. To lead a good life, or to endeavour to do so, through the mere hope of future reward, or dread of future punishment, is acting from a low and mercenary principle in comparison with the motives that should operate upon the true Christian,

SERM. XIV. Christian, and stimulate *him* to works of righteousness. Besides, Christianity does really not promise us any thing future as a *reward* of virtue, strictly so called; not as a recompence for the worthiness of the work, but as proceeding from God's mere bounty. To virtue in all its branches we were bound, long before Christianity prevailed among us. The law of the Lord written in our hearts would have laid us always under the obligation of strict obedience to it, independent of any promises which the Gospel holds forth. We never were, nor ever shall be, free from this obligation; but how far we are to look for *a reward* for our obedience, it would well become us to consider. There is a short but very apt parable to this purpose to be found in the Gospel of St. Luke, which, though it may not perhaps strike you at the first hearing, yet I shall not despair of proving to you that it is greatly connected with what I have been saying. "*And the* "*Apostle said unto the Lord, increase our* "*faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith* "*as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say,*

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" *unto this sycamine tree, be thou plucked up* " *by the root, and be thou planted in the sea,* " *and it should obey you. But which of you* " *having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle,* " *will say unto him by and by, when he is* " *come from the field: go and sit down to* " *meat. And will not rather say unto him,* " *make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird* " *thyself, and serve me till I have eaten and* " *drunken, and afterwards thou shalt eat and* " *drink? Doth he thank that servant because* " *he did the things that were commanded him?* " *I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall* " *have done all those things which are com-* " *manded you, say, we are unprofitable ser-* " *vants, we have done that which was our* " *duty to do.*" Now this parable sets the matter in the right light. Whatever we may suppose, we have no *title* to *reward* for obeying the commandments of God; it is our bounden duty, let what will come of it. The parable indeed cannot set it in its *full* light, because among ourselves there is always something due to a good and faithful servant; and as he is our fellow-creature, we may owe him even thanks for his

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his care and fidelity, but between God and us the case is different—God receives nothing from all our services; "*If thou be* "*righteous,*" says Elihu to Job, "*what* "*givest thou him*, or *what receiveth he at thy* "*hand?*" To which we may add the remark of the holy Psalmist, "*Thy goodness reach-* "*eth not unto him.*" God is above all wants, and therefore in reality in need of no services; but he is supreme above all things, and therefore he may promulgate his laws freely, and require strict obedience. But from what I have been saying, let it not be imagined I am depreciating good works—far from it. They are not the less amiable for being necessary, but as the case stands with us Christians, we have a nobler hope, than what can arise from any prospect of recompence strictly due to our just deeds. And the text I have chosen may serve to open your eyes to the truth of what I have been urging. In the text, two things are very prominent and noticeable: we are there called the servants of God—death is said to be the *wages* of sin, but that *the gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ

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our Lord. Here it is plain, that eternal life is not represented as the *wages* of *righteousness*, as death is said to be the *wages* of *sin*, but it is *a gift*, a free gift of God through Jesus Christ. The servants of God, all men are by nature, as the dependent creatures of his hands, and amenable to his holy laws, so far as they are made known; but we who have been baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are the servants of God, *through* JESUS CHRIST; or rather, (for so are we ennobled by his redemption of us), even the *heirs of God*, and *joint heirs with Christ*. Here then we ought to find the spring and principle of all our good actions: with steady faith we must fix our eyes on our Redeemer, who has set us free from sin, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life. Our good works are a debt due to God under all circumstances whatsoever; at all events, we are bound to fulfil his commandments; but under the operation of a true Christian faith, our good works become a badge of our profession; signs of our loyalty to the Saviour of the world; SERM. XIV.

SERM. XIV. claiming no reward on their own account, but yet serving to recommend us to him who died for us, and so far putting us in the way of the gift of eternal life, which he has promised to all such as love him, and keep his commandments. Now though it is not to be supposed, but that, in the case of those who have not received the good tidings of Christ's covenant, good works will in some way or other operate to their advantage in the world to come independent of any faith in Christ; yet good works, springing from a love and confidence in our blessed Lord, may well be expected to stand higher in his regard. Our blessed Lord laid down his life for *us*, and called upon us to follow him. For his sake boldly to withstand temptations; to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil; to mortify our fleshly lusts that war against our souls; and to glory in his cross and passion. Here is a hope afforded us far beyond the common desert of good moral actions; by this call of our blessed Lord we are enlisted under his banners, and if we prove ourselves worthy of our high calling, we shall inherit the promises.

promises. Good works then, without any regard to the merciful interposition of our blessed Saviour, may possibly obtain for us *the wages* due to them; but good works, proceeding from a sound faith and confidence in Christ, may obtain for us something far greater than the just measure of *wages*, for we shall be saved and advanced through *grace*; and that not of ourselves, not as *wages earned*, but it will be *the gift* of God. And now possibly I was but right, when I said at the beginning of this discourse, that this great and noble principle was often overlooked and neglected. Do you regulate your actions by a just sense of all that your Saviour and Redeemer has done for you? Do your righteous acts spring from a high and noble sense of gratitude to him who laid down his life for you, or do you only think to compass the joys of heaven as a just *recompence* of your good deeds? Beware of such a mistake. The joys of heaven are transcendent, far exceeding any thing our actions here below can *merit*. When we shall have done all we are commanded to do, we shall still be but "*unprofitable ser-*

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SERM. XIV. "*vants*" to the Lord who bought us. As he cannot be benefited by our good deeds, he is under no obligation to *reward* us for them; nevertheless, of his own free will, he has indeed promised us most great and glorious rewards, which, through faith in his name, faith working by love, and made perfect through obedience, we may finally attain to. But when I said that this great and efficacious motive, this operating sense of our Redeemer's goodness towards us, was often overlooked and neglected, I observed also that it was sometimes made too much of. This may sound strange. Can our sense of God's goodness to us through Jesus Christ, be ever made too much of? be ever carried too far? Yes, experience teaches us that it may be; for some, too eager to put their whole trust in the merits and mediation of Christ, neglect all outward acts of righteousness. They think Jesus Christ has not only done much, but every thing for them: that by *his* righteousness we shall be saved without any righteousness of our own. That his blood will wash away all sins, and that by mere faith in his name they shall be saved. This

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is going very much too far. The merits of Christ will be applied to those, not who only call upon his name, through faith in his name, but who in remembrance of his cross and passion shall be careful to do what is required of them, to the "*working* "*out of their own salvation with fear and* "*trembling.*" When he requires faith, he does not require that assured confidence, that shall set us above all danger of falling, but that faith which shall be proved by our works; that faith that shall purify our hearts from every evil thought; that faith which is connected with charity, with the love of God and the love of our neighbour. For though we cannot indeed make too much or think too highly of the death of Christ, as an atonement and forfeit paid for our sins; yet we shall sadly err, not considering the Scriptures, if we think that Christ came into the world to save sinners, continuing in their sins; he came to pay a ransom for us, that we might be redeemed from the punishment due to sin in our own bodies, but he came also, as preparatory to this future and final redemption,

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" *to purify us unto himself as a peculiar people* " *zealous of good works.*" " *The grace of* " *God did appear unto all men bringing sal-* " *vation.*" This is true; but how did it appear? In the person of the blessed Jesus, teaching both by words and example, that " *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we* " *should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in* " *this present world.*" But though this seems to be made as clear as possible by Scripture, that faith and works are to go hand in hand, that faith without works is not a living and efficacious, but a dead and fruitless faith; yet, as if men were resolved to run into mistakes, there are still many who seek to separate them, and so much so, as to cause no small divisions in the church. Thus if *we* preach to you of morality, recommending as the Apostles themselves recommended to their Disciples, that ye " *eschew evil, and do good;*" that ye " *draw* " *not nigh to God, without cleansing your* " *hands, and purifying your hearts from sin:*" that ye " *lay apart all filthiness and super-* " *fluity of naughtiness, and mortify your mem-* " *bers which are upon the earth, fornication,* " *uncleanness,*

" *uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concu-* SERM.
" *piscence, and covetousness;*" there are XIV.
those who will tell you we do not preach *the Gospel of Christ;* that Christ having died to redeem you from sin, you have nothing more to do than to trust to him to save you, to call upon his name daily, and to place all your hope in *his* righteousness. Surely we do not transgress the bounds of charity, if we pronounce such doctrine to be in direct contradiction to our Saviour's own words. Not every one, saith he, that " *saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into* " *the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth* " *the will of my father which is in heaven.*" This is our duty here, to follow after righteousness in hope of the gift laid up in store for those who prove their faith in the blessed Jesus, by keeping his commandments. It is through his mediation, intercession, and atonement, we shall be set free hereafter from the punishment of sin; but it is not less our duty, for his sake, to keep ourselves " *unspotted from the world,*" till it please God to call us hence. The virtue to be opposed to both these errors is humility;

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lity; the deepest and most profound sense of your own unworthiness and God's transcendent goodness. Do good and follow after holiness to the best of your abilities, otherwise neither will God the Father, or our blessed Redeemer, receive you as their servants.—This be sure of; but trust not to your own righteousness in any shape: it is your duty to be good, and obedient to God's commandments. But there are gifts of joy and happiness unbounded offered to you through Christ, if you will manfully fight under his banners, as you have bound yourselves by your baptismal vow, against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Your good works are here put upon a different footing—you are not labouring for *wages;* the service of God is perfect freedom; you are testifying your love of Christ, and doing all for the glory of his holy name. This must be better than merely calling upon him; this is testifying your gratitude, your loyalty, your confidence in him. This is openly to shew, that if he could want your services, they would not be withheld; whereas, in the other case, there is

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an indolence and carelessness apparent, very inconsistent with the call of our blessed Saviour. To consider ourselves as set free from the power of sin in this life, by calling upon his name, is an easy way of getting rid of the enemies set in array against us. Christ inculcates no such confidence; he does not tell us that he will put us out of the way of temptations, but that if, for his sake, we manfully oppose them, he will be present through his spirit to strengthen and support us. What "*the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus*" has obtained for us, is not any present freedom from the contagion of sin, but "*an inhe- "ritance reserved in heaven*" for the "*obe- "dient, to be revealed at the last day.*" The gift is not bestowed upon us yet, though the ransom is indeed paid—without the ransom having been paid, we could have no hope of salvation, but without good works we can have, after all, no assurance of reaping the benefits of that ransom. Call then for ever upon the name of the Lord; he is your salvation; and I by no means wish to set you free from this high

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and important duty, but trust not to any mere calling. Call upon him to help you in this your time of need—in this your anxious state of trial and probation. Call upon him to strengthen your faith, and animate your endeavours after righteousness. Call upon him to lead you into the paths of life; "*Call upon him to accept you, "inasmuch as you fear him, and to the best of "your abilities work righteousness.*" But, above all, be careful to think no more highly of yourselves than that, after all, you are unprofitable servants: without these services you could not be accepted, because they are especially required of you; you must not think to compass heaven by claim, but by confidence in the promises of Christ; not in virtue of your good works, but by proving yourselves his faithful soldiers and servants unto your lives' end. But it is the lot of all people to be evil spoken of. Because we preach the necessity of good works as a proof of our obedience to Christ, we are said to put our whole trust in them, and to neglect the so great salvation offered to us through Jesus

Christ. But this is really not so; we rely upon nothing but Christ's atonement to save us at the last day, and we call upon him in all our prayers accordingly, to "*save and defend us*," to "*have mercy upon* "*us, and shew us his salvation*;" but we do indeed urge and recommend good works to give efficacy to our prayers. All are sinners, and we among the rest, and Christ it is true has died for the redemption of sinners, but of what sinners? of those that "*repent*," and "*turn away from their wick-* "*edness*," not of those who persist in their sins, and yet expect to be saved. We estimate good works as low as those who depend solely on their belief; for we acknowledge with humility that it is but our duty to do well, and so far from meriting rewards at the hand of God, by any thing we can do, we are after all but unprofitable servants. Let us then endeavour to shake off all reproaches, and put to silence the ignorance of those who so misrepresent us, by a steady perseverance in "*well-doing*." This is undoubtedly the advice of an inspired Apostle, and we need not be afraid

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of following it; at the same time, let us be careful not to give them ground to suppose we are less Christians than they are, or build our hopes of eternal life less on the free merits and mercies of our blessed Redeemer. In all that we do, let us do it to the glory of God. And though we should still at the last day be found unprofitable servants, as to any benefits we can have conferred on our blessed Lord, yet let us hope and pray that in consideration of our sincere endeavours, "*God will supply* "*our need out of the abundance of his riches* "*in glory, by Christ Jesus.*" Philipp. iv. 19.

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SERMON XV.

THE FOLLY OF MOCKING AT SIN.

PROVERBS XIV. 9.

Fools make a Mock at Sin.

THIS remark of the wise king of Israel is not to be received as a mere assertion of a fact; much valuable instruction is to be gathered from it. It is one thing, simply to declare that fools make a mock at sin—it is another, to shew that making a mock at sin constitutes folly, or at least is a main branch of it. The folly of making a mock at sin must consist in the danger of doing so; therefore, if there is no danger, there is no folly in the act. But if there is so manifest

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manifest danger in it, that no considerate man could ever be expected to run the risk of it, it is reasonable at once to pronounce it to be actual folly. The danger we run into by making light of sin, must not be confounded with other dangers to which, in this mortal life, we may be exposed. Of some dangers, it may be a virtue to make small account; to despise and defy them: dangers that stand in the way either of our duty to God, or our duty to man. It is not folly, but true righteousness, and true courage, to defy and make light of such dangers; whereas, in making light of sin, as it would be easy to shew that it must be inconsistent with every principle of righteousness, so it would not be difficult to prove that there can be no true courage in it. And yet probably it can only be under a pretence of great courage that men are ever induced to make a mock at sin: they must be sensible that the wise and considerate always act under a serious apprehension of the evil consequences of sin, which evil consequences they, on the contrary, affect to be above,

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and to despise, and generally not without contempt of the very persons of those who act more soberly and discreetly, looking upon them as people of a timid constitution, without the spirit or magnanimity which the Lord of this lower creation should possess. Man does not err much perhaps when he thus looks upon himself as the Lord of this lower creation. Such provision is made for all his wants and amusements, that indeed he may well be proud of the distinction. The great and weighty mass of the globe itself he can, in some measure, manage as he pleases; commit the seed to its bosom to be fostered by its warmth and juices till it grows up into corn for the food of man, or herb for the food of cattle; he can raise from it the stately oak, wherewith to build him an habitation to live in, or the more humble plant which, by various curious contrivances, he weaves into clothing for his body. Over the whole vegetable world, over all that springs out of the earth, he exercises uncontrouled dominion; nor do the waters stop his progress; over these in his bark of wood does he make his way, keeping

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keeping up a communication with all the kingdoms of the earth. His command over the animal race is still more extraordinary. For among these many are rendered subject to him by art and management, which are much his superiors in natural powers. Not to dwell longer upon this however than is necessary, it must be admitted that man has whereof to be proud, inasmuch as he is certainly placed in a situation of great power as to all the things around him on this globe of earth; but is his pride to know no bounds, because he can do as he pleases with the things rendered by the providence of God subordinate to him in this world; is he to do as he pleases in regard to every thing in the universe? because he can see nothing below him in the scale of creation, over which he cannot exercise authority; is there therefore nothing to be discovered above him, to whose authority he ought himself to submit? The very power that he is able to exercise over the parts of the creation subject to him, should lead him to an immediate sense of the power that may be exercised over himself.

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What is the object of the power he exercises over the different parts of the creation subject to him? Is it not in all instances to render them subservient to the use of man? Is it not to make them harmonise with the general views and wants of society? And is it likely that man himself should have been left to act at random, when there is no being present in the world more able to do mischief, or thwart the chief ends of society? No, fortunately for us, man has a superior too! We may see by the disposition of those who dare to make a mock at sin, what a world this would be, if all men were equally inclined to cast off restraint! To prevent so fatal an event the Almighty has subjected us to his own righteous laws, which he has promulgated among us, partly by the intervention of prophets and teachers, partly by descending himself from heaven to instruct us, and partly by the natural notices of good and evil engraved on our hearts. Of these laws and precepts every transgression is sin; those therefore who make a mock at sin, do in fact make a mock of that su-

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preme legislator, by whose authority, and by whose laws, sin is prohibited and forbidden. But what becomes of the pride of man when he puts himself into this situation? What becomes of this Lord of this lower creation, when he presumes to put himself into competition with the God of heaven and of earth! What name shall we give to that barefaced and inconsiderate confidence with which the sinner slights God's laws? Shall we call it courage? No, there is no real courage in venturing to fly in the face of God; there is a great deal of blustering and vain conceit, a great deal of insolence and rashness, and to recur to the words of my text, a great deal indeed of the worst sort of folly. And yet this folly is but too common in all ranks and conditions of life. It is to be found among the young, and too often among the aged; if the poor are not exempt from it, neither are the rich. I do not mean to speak without discrimination; I do not mean to say that all of any condition are subject to this folly. Some of the young are too discreet, many of the aged too considerate about

their latter end. Some of the rich set good examples of virtue and of piety, and many of the poor place all their hopes, as they should do, in the mercy and salvation of God. Nevertheless it is much too commonly the case, that a mock is made at sin. Many commit sin for pleasure sake, many for profit sake. Many for want of reflection, many even in spite of all reflection. It may be worth our while to consider the most obvious consequences of this sort of behaviour, and I think it will be easy to shew, that a disposition to mock at sin leads to a breach of all God's commandments. And first, to make a mock at sin, that is to make light of it, and think it of no serious consequence, is certainly to throw off all submission and allegiance to God, who has denounced the heaviest punishments against all sin and disobedience. To be induced by any temptations to neglect the worship of God, and obedience to his commands, is to embrace some object in preference thereto; either by seeking after a vain popularity among others as thoughtless and indiscreet as ourselves, or

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by endeavouring to compass the joys of this life, to the absolute forfeiture of all the joys of heaven. It is to fall down and worship all the vain and transitory idols of this world, in absolute neglect of the duty we owe to our Father and Creator, which is in heaven. If this does not strike us, as any immediate acknowledgment of other gods besides the only God of heaven, it must at least appear to the most inconsiderate, to be a great neglect of the one true God. But perhaps there is no more common mode of mocking at sin, than the habit of swearing so peremptorily forbidden by the third commandment. To any body capable of apprehending the real and absolute majesty of God, and comparing it with the weakness and insignificance of human beings, it must appear horrible to think how continually, not only upon the most ordinary, but sometimes upon the most base and wicked occasions, his holy name is profaned. His name ought to be a sanctuary for those to fly to, who have no other possible means of attesting the truth, or proving their own innocence; instead of which

which it is chiefly the profligate, and those who are entirely lost to all sense of religion and decency, that appeal to it most: if indeed they do appeal, which I would hope they do not; for this would be mockery past all bearing. However, it is a crying sin among us, and should be corrected; instead of there being any hope that it should be so, I fear it is quite otherwise, for those who are of an age to be corrected, are not discouraged as they should be. It must be known to you, that "*out of the mouths of very babes and sucklings,*" such things are rather tolerated than discountenanced. Go into our streets and highways, and mark but the progress and extent of this profanation of the name of God. This is a most gross mocking at sin, a proof of folly in those who practise it—a proof of folly in those who tolerate it, while they might suppress it. Sin is mocked at, or made light of, in the profanation of the Sabbath, in the profanation of God's holy temple, and the contempt with which religious duties and religious ceremonies are treated. The Sabbath of the

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the Lord ought to be kept holy; and those who will not keep it holy, (only one day out of seven as it is), must needs put a great slight upon the Deity. What can people think of neglecting to pray to God? Can it be imagined that they can prosper without God's help? What are threescore years and ten, the probable allotment of human life, to the ages of eternity that may be before us? Here we are left to ourselves in a certain degree; we do not actually see God, but he sees *us* nevertheless; and in the other world we are to be admitted to his presence. Can we fancy that in *that* state we shall be permitted to make a mockery of his holy laws? If not, why should we venture to do it here? It is a base and cowardly liberty to take;—a liberty however in which we grossly deceive ourselves; for though we cannot see, with our bodily senses, that God is present, he is no less so in reality; he is at hand ever, noting our evil ways, and contempt of his laws. A great mockery of him it is, to neglect to sanctify his Sabbath by coming to his temple to offer up our praises and

and thanksgivings, our supplications and prayers. But it is a sad mockery too, to come to his temple for these purposes, and yet in any manner neglect those great and important ends of our coming: praises without gratitude, and prayers without humility and submission, are intolerable mockeries of God, for which we shall undoubtedly have to answer in the great day of judgment; but besides the neglect of these great duties, some come to the temple of God, even, it is to be feared, for the most idle and inexcusable ends—perhaps only to see and be seen; to be in a crowd, and to put themselves in the way of greetings in the synagogue. Some come with every disposition to levity and mirth, forgetful totally of the solemnity of the place, and the serious duties they are expected to discharge. This is a transgression to which, from their time of life, the young are naturally more prone than the aged. We must allow it to be pardonable while they are not taught better; but let this be reflected upon, that there are few so destitute and forlorn as to have no aged friend belonging to

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to them who should teach them better. The sin must rest with these, if they take no pains to teach the young better; and let this also be remembered, that in regard to those not yet taught the evil of their ways, the being once told of it is enough; levity and mirth, in the house of God, are quite out of their proper place; in every way unbecoming; and if persisted in, must needs amount to a heinous sin in the sight of that Being who is of too pure eyes to look with any benignity on such foul iniquity. In regard to those who might teach them better, it must needs be required at their hands; the wise man, who in the words of my text gave us that just character of fools, that they make a mock at sin, may be said to have given us a good account of his own laudable proficiency in wisdom, when he tells us, that his parents "*taught him in the way of righteousness, and* "*led him to the right paths.*" If those who make a mock at sin, are from this very disposition so liable to infringe all the commandments of the first table; if they are likely to fall into such very dangerous and alarming

alarming errors, as the open denial of God, a defiance of his authority, a contempt of his laws, a profanation of his name, a neglect of his Sabbath, or an abuse of his holy temple, how shall we expect that the laws of the second table, those that relate only to man, will be more religiously observed? If they should be, depend on it it is accidental; for he who can insult his Maker, will not be over scrupulous of injuring his neighbour. He who will not regard the eternal welfare of his own soul, is little to be expected to shew much respect to the worldly concerns of his fellow-creatures. We must not look to them therefore for any of the social virtues. Little are they likely to regard the comfort, the property, or even the lives of those around them; if their desires tempt them to covet, their contempt of all that is good will as easily induce them to steal, to bear false witness, and to trample on every right by which man, as a member of society, is distinguished. There is no end, in short, to the misdoings which those may be hurried into, who are unfortunately, by want of education,

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education, or want of feeling, or want of honor and honesty, in a condition to make a mock at sin. Sin is of most serious and weighty importance. In the end it will inevitably make a mock of those who are weak enough here to foster and indulge it. Its avenger stands ready to meet us at the utmost confines of this short and transitory life, armed with its scourges, more bitter and dreadful than it is in our power to describe. To the righteous, that is, to the devout and repentant Christian, death has no sting, nor over them can the grave obtain a victory: not so with "*the mockers*;" their "*bands shall be made strong*." The Lord of the whole earth seeth their vanity, and if they will not learn in time to turn from the evil of their ways, "*he that dwell-*
"*eth in heaven, will laugh them to scorn; the*
"*Lord, the Almighty God, will have them*
"*in derision*."

To conclude—The wise King who gave us this general character of fools, that they are disposed to make a mock at sin, has accompanied his remark, in the chapter whence

whence my text is taken, with many other proverbial precepts, which admirably tend to shew, how truly it may be called folly to mock at sin; how justly it may be denominated wisdom, to follow after righteousness. The propriety of the passages need not be discussed. They are obvious to all. "*Fools,*" says he, "*make a mock at* "*sin; but with the righteous there is favour.*" "*The house of the wicked shall be overthrown,* "*but the tabernacle of the upright shall* "*flourish. There is a way which seemeth* "*right unto a man, but the end thereof are* "*the ways of death. Even in laughter the* "*heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth* "*is heaviness. A wise man feareth and de-* "*parteth from evil, but the fool rageth and is* "*confident. The evil* [*shall*] *bow before the* "*good, and the wicked at the gates of the* "*righteous. Do they not err that devise* "*evil, but mercy and truth s hall be to them* "*that devise good. In the fear of the Lord* "*is* (*true*) *confidence, and his children shall* "*have a place of refuge. The wicked will* "*be driven away in his wickedness, but the* "*righteous hath hope in his death!*"

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SERMON XVI.

THE BEATITUDES.

LUKE VI. 20.

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, Blessed be ye poor, for your's is the kingdom of God.

IN the same strain, and in the verses immediately following my text, our Saviour announces blessings to various other descriptions of persons; "*Blessed are ye that* "*hunger, for ye shall be filled*; *blessed are* "*ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh,*" and so on. There is nothing that has more constantly and generally engaged the attention of men of reflection, than to find out what they call man's *chief good;* I speak of those speculative reasoners who have

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have thought that the human nature might be brought to perfection, and man's permanent happiness established, by some system of human laws, and some scheme of morality founded on the mere nature of things. We, as Christians, are able to cut the matter short, and without the aid of great acquirements in learning, to leave all these great reasoners behind. God has been pleased to reveal to us much of his ways, and the whole of his will in regard to mankind in general; and we know to a certainty, without the labour of argument, and the doubts and difficulties of much study, that the "*chief good*" of man consists in virtue and religion. To "*love the* "*Lord our God with all our hearts, and* "*mind and soul,*" and to act towards our fellow creatures as we would they should act by us. This will tend to render our life here below tranquil, quiet, and happy, and hereafter will certainly recommend us to our heavenly Father, purchase for us the benefits of Christ's passion, and put us in possession of unfading glory and happiness, either by continuing for ever and ever,

ever, and in a more exalted manner, all the innocent and interesting pleasures of our mortal state, should our life here have been more prosperous than otherwise; or, if we shall have been doomed to misery and woe here, then by removing these far from us, wiping the tears of sorrow for ever from our eyes, and raising us from the grave of death to the kingdom of God, which is joy and peace. It is not to be wondered at that men have thus always been found curious and inquisitive about the nature and attainment of happiness; for let appearances be what they may, there is no man that has not this object always at heart. The most careless and thoughtless to all outward appearances are perhaps as anxiously and busily engaged in this pursuit, as the most studious philosopher that ever applied himself to such abstruse speculations. Let us regard for a moment the dissipated, the idle, the intemperate, and see what pains they take to compass this great end. Does not the prodigal ruin his fortune, his fame, his credit? Does he not sometimes sacrifice his family and his friend,

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SERM. XVI. friend, to possess himself of luxuries and superfluities which for a time he thinks bring pleasure and happiness with them? Does he not assume an air of gaiety and ease? Does he not seem to think it certain that he is really happier than his neighbours, when perhaps he is squandering what, in a very few years, nay less possibly, months, he may want to buy food for his famished children, raiment to cover his own nakedness, or to save him from the horrors and misery of a loathsome prison? Does not this man take great pains to compass happiness? Turn then to the idle. He feels himself happy so often as he can get released from the labours and drudgery of life; those whom he sees earning their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, he pities and perhaps despises; he thinks it better to set in the sunshine and sing; happy indeed if he is ever half so innocently occupied. All this while let it be allowed his hours pass on smoothly; he is free from care and fatigue, from hunger and thirst; but when old age creeps upon him, or sickness befals him, when the vanities of life begin

begin to lose their relish, and he cannot stir abroad in search of them, where are then the fruits of industry laid up in store for the evil day? Where is the reflection on a life well spent to cheer his spirits and raise his hopes; and who shall he expect to labour for him now; who would not labour for himself when he had strength to do it? At all events, where is his happiness, when he is become a dependent pensioner on his fellow creatures, instead of having to enjoy the fruits of his own industry with credit and reputation? Here then also is much sacrificed to purchase what is thought happiness. Lastly, view the intemperate man. He finds great pleasure in the gratification of his senses; his belly is his God; he is careful only to eat and to drink, and to wanton in all sorts of rioting and debaucheries. This man also is in search of happiness, and see where he finds it: behold him in the hour of intoxication—his senses bewildered, his reason gone, his form and countenance distorted and swoln; a disgrace to his family and friends, a nuisance and annoy-

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ance to all his neighbours. This man finds his mistake almost to a certainty: in the two other cases perhaps the evil may be repaired; the prodigal, one time or other, may perhaps become frugal; the idle, industrious; but let the drunkard become ever so sober and regular, the evil is done; his health is impaired past recovery, and his days shortened to a span, or, if not shortened, an old age awaits him of pains and disease intolerably distressing. In this case vice is a bodily poison, and yet even this is recurred to by some as a cure and antidote to care, as conferring actual pleasure and happiness. We know indeed that all these several modes of life are held to abound with both, by those who adopt them. If happiness then is really mens' pursuit, and the first object of their desires, and if we see besides, not only that the wise and studious have differed about the means of attaining to it, but that daily and hourly men go astray in search of it, to the loss of health, and fame, and fortune, how ought we to reverence and adore the blessed author of our religion, who has,

in all points, provided for the wants and even wishes of mankind, in regard to this most important and indispensable object! Jesus Christ, in opening to us the gates of everlasting life, has shewn us where true happiness alone is to be found. The kingdom of God is actual joy and peace. In dying for us, he has satisfied the justice of our Creator, and rendered us capable of attaining to the joys of heaven. By his doctrine of repentance and faith, and charity, he has taught us the true means of obtaining the object we are all in search of—real and solid happiness: and by the many most inimitable lessons of morality he has left us in his holy Gospel, he has put it past a doubt, what mode of life is best suited to our nature. Recollecting then the errors which we must witness continually, in the wild and infatuated conduct of many around us, let us apply ourselves to examine what was our blessed Lord's opinion in this matter. When he is about to point out to the notice of mankind those of the sons of men, most happy and at ease, he does not say, blessed are the idle and

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dissipated, the wealthy and the vain, the high-fed glutton, or the pampered prince; but blessed are the poor and meek, the hungry and thirsty, the sorrowful and afflicted, the lowly and humble. The fact is, eternal Providence seeth all things; not only the beginning of things, but the end and consequences; whereas short-sighted man takes but small account of remote events; and those most wrapped up in the present, extend their views the least of all. The pleasure of a moment is not to be balanced against the pain of an hour; the pleasure of an hour against the pain of a day; or the pleasure of a day against the pain of a year: this our own reason, if we would but listen to it, is quite competent to point out to us; upon this ground Christianity proceeds, and so far from doing violence to our natures, does in fact totally and entirely coincide with it; it is *we* that do a violence to nature, and contradict its clearest suggestions, when we, with our eyes open, purchase small and transitory pleasures at the price of long and durable pain. Our blessed Saviour knew what was the

the real importance of all our actions here; SERM. he knew not only what they were in themselves, but what they would inevitably lead to; he therefore, viewing the errors of mankind in all their consequences, could to a certainty pronounce that, contrary to our estimation of things, those most abject and destitute here, were in fact most happy; for they were laying up for themselves a store of durable pleasures hereafter, treasures in heaven which could not fail: whereas those most gay and careless in our eyes, most abounding with luxuries, and most free from worldly toil and hardships, were in fact not happy, for they, by their short and transitory vanities, were laying up for themselves a store of misery and woe, both here, by the natural effects of vice and intemperance, and hereafter, in the loss of heaven and its joys. But the point is very certain, even to most men, if they would but bring themselves coolly and deliberately to weigh the matter in their minds; for virtue and vice are not so difficult to distinguish; but in truth those who follow after virtue prefer virtue, and

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their actions agree with their reason; whereas those who follow vice prefer the present transitory pleasures of vice to the future durable rewards of virtue, and thus sin against their own reason, and the will of God, at the same time. Truly they are not to be called happy; they are very wicked in the sight of God, and in no manner amiable in the sight of man; and as to what they will be when their follies and vanities are over, they need not be told, for the sentence passed on them by reason and revelation both, is not so secret as to be unknown to any; only they stop their ears against instruction, and so add to the perverseness of their ways. From what has been said we may certainly collect thus much, that we need no longer bewilder ourselves to find out what is man's chief good; his chief good certainly is, to compass the joys of heaven by following the commandments of God, which are all revealed to us in the holy Scriptures, together with the great scheme of Christian redemption, on which our eternal happiness finally depends. Our Bible, in short, will entirely point

point out to us both the object of our pursuits, and the only infallible means of attaining to it; it will point out all we have to do, and what we are to leave undone. It will not lead us into a labyrinth of laboured deductions, and refined speculations, but by an easy reference of every action of our lives, to those two great leading principles, the love of God and of our neighbour; put us in complete possession of such a rule of moral and religious conduct, as may for ever be our guide through all the chances and changes of this mortal life. SERM. XVI.

And now to proceed to the further consideration of those conditions which our Saviour pronounces to be blessed, in the discourse whence my text is taken, with which I shall conclude.—First, however, this should be premised, that though each is distinctly and particularly said to be blessed, it does not follow, that any one virtue, or any one condition alone, will save us, or procure us the blessings of heaven, but only, that when all our actions, and

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and the whole tenor of our lives are consistent with the character there described, then we shall be held worthy of being exalted to the kingdom of God. This is worthy of notice, because the error has prevailed in former times, and may perhaps, in some shape or other, be too often indulged now. The Jews particularly conceived that great attention to one law might excuse the breach of others; the Church of Rome had many compositions for the transgression of the laws of God, founded upon the same *ostensible* principle. The real principle, it is to be feared, was extortion;—charity was allowed to cover a multitude of the most flagrant sins, when exercised in the shape of some rich boon to the church. It is too likely that those who rest, or pretend to rest, all their hopes upon faith, exclusive of good works, make a separation which the word of God does not warrant, and so fall into the same error.—But to return:—the discourse begins with the text; "*Blessed be ye poor, for your's is "the kingdom of God;*" then follows—"*blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall "be*

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"*be filled; blessed are ye that weep now, for* "*ye shall laugh; blessed are ye when men* "*shall hate you, and shall reproach you, and* "*cast out your name as evil for the son of* "*man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and* "*leap for joy; for behold your reward is* "*great in heaven.*" Perhaps the interpretation of these words, entirely depends on that one clause added to the fourth beatitude, Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, "*for the son of man's sake.*" There is no doubt but that poverty, considered singly and alone, can be entitled to no reward, either here or hereafter; neither yet the appetites of hunger and thirst, nor any other of the circumstances in which those are supposed to be who shall merit hereafter the blessings of God. We may be sure they must all have something further to recommend them, than is to be discerned merely in the several states and conditions so described. The poor, therefore, who upon our Saviour's declaration are to be blessed, are those who, though poor in our eyes, and destitute of worldly advantages, are yet rich in good works, and

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and all those Christian virtues which become their situation, who, though in a state of penury as to earthly endowments, are yet enriched with the influence of God's grace, and have treasures laid up for them in heaven. Those who hunger are not those who hunger after the bread that perisheth, but after that bread which, through the Saviour of the world, God has given us from heaven;—that bread and "*meat which* "*endureth to eternal life.*" They are those who, as our Saviour himself, on another memorable occasion, describes, as "*hun-* "*gering and thirsting after righteousness;*" that is, so far from being governed by any irregular appetites, or inordinate desires, do indeed earnestly long for that inherent righteousness which shall teach them always to follow after what is good, and in all instances whatsoever to eschew evil. Those that weep and mourn are not those prone to murmur and complain at the transitory evil and temporary distresses incident to human nature, but those who weep and sorrow for their own weaknesses and infirmities; who manifest a becoming contrition

trition for all past transgressions, and with the sighings and weepings of unfeigned repentance, go up to the altar of Christ to implore his mercy and gracious intercession. Those who endure the hatred and persecution of the world, are those who, as the Evangelist expressly tells us, are so hated and persecuted "*for the son of man's* "*sake.*" In the cause of Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of the world! these need not fear, but on the contrary may rather rejoice and be exceeding glad, assured that their Redeemer beholds all their unworthy sufferings and persecutions, for his name's sake; and as he is able, so he will be ready in the day of judgment, as a recompence for their steady and unshaken adherence to his Gospel, to advance them to their just reward in heaven. In short, through the sinfulness of man, so opposite now are the hopes and prospects, and enjoyments of this world, and that which is to come, that it is but too reasonable to consider our losses here as conducive to our gain hereafter. And, on the contrary, to regard our worldly advantages as so many

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snares

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snares and temptations in the way of our eternal happiness in heaven. Let us apply ourselves then to reflect upon the general lesson to be drawn from what has been laid before you. Let us learn to be suspicious of all worldly pleasures and prosperity, and to correct ourselves when troubles and afflictions are sent to mortify and subdue our lusts and passions. It has been beautifully and truly said, that prosperous circumstances are dangerous, in that they are often a sweet poison, while afflictions and misfortunes are a healing though bitter medicine. It is so frequently, past all doubt; yet not always. The prosperous man, who is grateful to God, humble in his sight, and merciful to his fellow-creatures, is in no danger from the seductions usually flowing from prosperity, while the unhappy wretch, who repines at adversity as if God had no right to afflict him, and who curses his Maker in the hour of distress; to him trouble is no medicine, but a dreadful aggravation of his distemper. Let us pray to God to do away the film from before our eyes, that we may see

see to distinguish truly the value and importance of all worldly events, never trusting to prosperity so far as to think happiness can consist in dissipation, idleness, or intemperance; for by them happiness is finally destroyed: neither being so cast down by adversity as to murmur or blaspheme, for by adversity often the soul is tried, and by patience and well-doing it may be made the surest instrument of real happiness and joy.

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SERMON XVII.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

MATTHEW XIII. 13.

Therefore speak I to them in Parables.

IT is sadly the case with respect to many of the first duties of life, that though they are in themselves so obvious, as to strike the dullest mind, when duly proposed and laid open; yet there are generally so many intervening circumstances to prevent such a manifestation of them, that it is scarcely one in a hundred who sees and judges of them aright. There is a mote in the eye which perplexes the sight, and renders the vision indistinct. We can acknowledge the duty in general, but we cannot apply it to circumstances: what would undoubtedly be wrong in one case, may, we suppose, in fifty others be right; what in its proper

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proper point of light could assume but one appearance, by a change of position, or some disturbance happening with respect to the medium through which we look at it, the same thing may take various shapes and figures, and lose all traces of its real nature and properties. It is incredible how the very best of us are at times deceived in these matters, and how we suffer ourselves to be blinded in judging both of our own actions, and those of others: a thousand prejudices dazzle and bewilder us in the search after truth; and though the object might be made as clear and palpable as the daylight, yet we are content to see things "*through a glass darkly*," till chance or accident, and no care of our own, shall remove the impediments to our sight. For the natural or accidental imperfection of real vision, art has busied herself to provide various helps and remedies. Some of these are calculated to throw the object farther from us; some bring it nearer: some reduce it to bring it all into sight at once; some magnify it to bring forward particular parts. Those who have applied themselves

selves to remove the darkness of the human mind, and enable it to see, without prejudice, the great line of moral duty, have dealt with it after a manner nearly analogous, and proceeded in their supply of aid and assistance, in a way very similar. Those who are not capable of forming to themselves any rule of life, by a regular deduction of consequences, have had the matter contracted for them, and brought into the compass of short, proverbial sentences, and concise maxims. Those disposed to be careless and inconsiderate, acting often without due discrimination and regard to consequences, judging hastily, and without stopping minutely to examine into matters, have been taught to look more narrowly to their ways, by an amplification of trivial events, and a magnifying, as it were, of familiar objects, in fables and parables. Those who have judged wrongly of their own actions, because of their too near concern in them, have, by the same contrivance, had them set before them as the actions of others, and when thus carried further from them, they have judged

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rightly and well, and seen the whole matter in its proper point of view. Lastly, those whose judgment could enable them to pronounce well or ill of the actions of others, as removed from the influence of their own prejudices, but were incapable of applying the same scrutiny to their own conduct, have also by such means had the matter brought home to them, and the error of their own ways thus duly exposed. The parables of our blessed Saviour may all be considered as such moral helps to the mind of man. They are so laid before us as to touch, with no rude hand, any of our fond prejudices; we are imperceptibly led to draw our own conclusions without any impediment from our own concerns; and these conclusions therefore become just. In the Old Testament, we have some remarkable instances of the same mode of reproof and instruction. When we read of the righteous David wandering so far from the line of moral and religious duty, as to commit two of the foulest crimes without remorse or sorrow*, we are stag-

* 2 Sam. ch. xi.

gered

gered at the hardness of his heart, and can scarce bring ourselves to believe he had ever a clear view of the chief duties of life; yet this was manifestly not the case, but passion and prejudice had blinded him. When Nathan brought these matters to his mind, by the fable of the poor man's lamb *, he could discover clearly the line of moral duty once more, and could condemn a lesser crime in another, though he had unaccountably excused the greater sin in himself. When the Sechemites, as related in the book of Judges †, madly chose for their king the murderous Abimeleck, the very worst of all the sons of Jerubbaal, Jotham avoided all direct expostulation with them, knowing they were too blinded by their prejudices to see the folly and indiscretion of their conduct; he pronounced the curse therefore that hung over them under the disguise of a fable; representing the trees of the forest as engaged in a like choice of a king to rule over and go-

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* 2 Sam. ch. xii. † ch. ix.

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vern them; foolishly passing by the fruitful olive, the fig-tree, and the vine, and fixing on the worthless bramble, from whose boughs they could expect neither shelter nor shade. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, we find St. Paul having recourse to the same expedient, to suppress all murmuring and discontent in regard chiefly indeed to the diversities of spiritual gifts in the Church, but incidentally also, for it is equally applicable, in regard to the different ranks and conditions of men in this life—a subject upon which we are generally as much liable to mistake as upon any other whatsoever. This distinction he shews to be a necessary circumstance in society, and that without rich and poor, superiors and inferiors, no community could exist; but he uses no learned argument to prove it, knowing they might be indisposed to listen to such; but he simply refers them to a consideration of their own bodies, composed of many members, yet all so dependent, the one on the other, that "*the eye cannot say to the hand I have no*

"*need*

" need of thee; nor yet the head to the foot SERM.
*" I have no need of you *."* XVII.

In the second lesson of this morning's service†, we have several parables;—the sower and his seed; the parable of the trees; of the grain of mustard-seed; the leaven; the hidden treasure; and of the net cast into the sea; all of which are admirably calculated to set forth the design, the importance, and the effects of the preaching of the Gospel. The time will not admit of my discussing these parables at length; nor is it indeed at all necessary, for as it happens, the curiosity of our Lord's own disciples has anticipated our's, and secured to us a regular explanation of most of them from the mouth of our blessed Saviour himself, as may be seen by reference to the chapter; which from beginning to end is full of instruction and advice. But, in the Gospel of this day‡, we have a very beautiful specimen of this mode of instruction, in which the parable is not ex-

* 1 Cor. xii. 21. † Sept. 12, Matt. xiii.
‡ 13th S. after Trinity.

plained

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plained so at large, but left in a great measure to our own interpretation. It seems, our Saviour had been addressed by a certain lawyer or scribe to instruct him in the great duties of life. It was no honest or religious motive that led him to put this question to our blessed Lord, but he did it to tempt or try him; to measure the extent of his knowledge in these matters; of his own sufficiency he had great assurance. When therefore he had satisfied our Saviour with respect to his reading, and had intimated that he knew the two great commandments of the law, the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, he thought to ensnare our blessed master, by a further question—"*and who is my neighbour?*" for the Jews, upon a corrupt tradition, had confined all neighbourly offices to those of their own tribe and nation. Our Saviour, therefore, knowing his heart, and all the false prejudices that prevented his seeing, in its right light, the great duty of universal benevolence, avoided any direct explanation or expostulation, judging truly that the seed of divine truth was choaked by weeds

weeds and tares in the breast of him whom he was addressing; and that no immediate remonstrance would have any weight or effect with him. Still, however, he knew that such was the irresistible beauty of this high virtue, when set in a proper light, and proposed without violence to any secret passions and prejudices, that, instead of reason and argument, he had recourse to a parable; so that when the lawyer asked "*who is my neighbour?*" Jesus made no direct reply, for that would have awakened his prejudices as a Jew; but, in order to disengage his mind from their baneful influence, he simply related to him, as an accidental tale, (though founded possibly on fact*) the following short story. SERM. XVII.

A certain man of our own nation went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and passing through the wild deserts and dangerous roads which are in those parts, he fell among thieves, who having not only plundered, stripped, and bound him, but also wounded him in a cruel and dangerous

* See Grotius and others.

manner,

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manner, went their way, leaving him half dead. Now it happened that as he lay in this deplorable state, there came down a certain Priest that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side; and likewise a Levite, who, though as well as the Priest he was his countryman, yet when he came to the place he also only looked on him, and passed by on the other side: and thus the distressed creature might have lain and perished, but for a certain Samaritan, who happened, as he journeyed, to come where he was. And seeing him in this sad condition, though he might easily discover him to be a Jew, and therefore an enemy to his name and nation; (for a bitter hatred subsisted between the Jews and the Samaritans) yet *he* had compassion on him, and going to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and then set him on his beast, conveyed him to an inn, and took care of him; and before he departed the next morning, carried his care and tenderness so far as to leave money with his host to secure his attention also, when he himself was gone, and promised more

more if the necessity of the case should require it. In this manner did our blessed Lord reply to the lawyer's question, which he knew he would now be able to answer for himself, for he had given him a case to judge of, detached from his own prejudices, and which he could draw but one general conclusion from. "*Which now of these "three thinkest thou was* neighbour *unto "him that fell among thieves?*" The lawyer, forgetful perhaps how he must condemn himself by the reply, immediately answered, "*He that shewed mercy on him.*" "*Then,*" said Jesus, "*go and do* thou *like-"wise!*"—Stand corrected and instructed by the story I have told you—no longer think to confine your compassion, your charity, and neighbourly offices to your own nation only, but consider the humane Samaritan, who, when he saw a Jew in distress, laid aside his animosity, treated him as a fellow-creature, bound up his wounds, and took care of him. SERM. XVII.

Thus it is that we should endeavour to get a view of the duties we owe to one another;

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another; we must all be aware how often passion, prejudice, and partiality are liable to hide from us the open path we should pursue. For some petty interest or other, we may neglect to bind up the wounds of those we know to be in trouble. We think they fell by their own fault, and so should be left to abide by the consequence. We regard them perhaps with an eye of scorn rather than pity, and looking more to our own concerns, pass by on the other side. I do not mean to represent uncharitableness as a predominant vice; in the common acceptation of the term, I believe it is far from being the case; but in considering every individual as our neighbour, we should seek always "*to do unto others as* "*we would they should do unto us.*" Now this great duty is not confined to the pouring in oil and wine into their bodily wounds, but should be held to extend to the saving them from every possible injury or injustice, not only that the hand might inflict, but that the heart might conceive, or the tongue utter. Every circumstance that disposes us to be more regardless of other people's

people's feelings than our own, should remind us of the parable in the Gospel. Trusting in the sufficiency of our own virtue, we may be often too hard upon the failings of others. In this we are represented by the narrow-minded Jew, who thought no indulgence was to be extended beyond the circle of his own tribe and country. Perhaps we know of many who have fallen into temptations, and are labouring under consciences sore wounded, who, with tender and considerate care, wholesome and good advice, might be brought back to the paths of virtue, and restored to peace of mind. If we go not out of our way at all to render assistance to these fallen fellow-creatures, we are represented by the cold-hearted and heedless priest, who passed by on the other side to avoid the sight of a disgusting object, and the trouble of binding up his wounds. Perhaps instead of helping to raise those that are fallen, and to speak peace to the broken-hearted, through some disgraceful motive of envy, pride, malice, or revenge, we propagate the slanderous tale, we

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we triumph over their disgrace, we drive them further and further from us, by scornful and opprobrious speeches; we are then represented by the merciless Levite, who could turn aside to look at the poor wounded man, but withheld all help and assistance. But if, in our commerce with the world, we cast an indulgent eye on the rest of mankind; and if we see a fellow-creature of any description whatsoever, poor or rich, godly or ungodly, old or young, countryman or stranger, fallen into trouble or distress of mind; worn down by misfortune, or oppressed with shame; in want of money, or in want of friends; if, in our journey through life, we happen to come where such are, and administer to their several necessities, having indiscriminately compassion on all; binding up their wounds, bodily or spiritual; pouring in "*oil and wine,*" or consolation and comfort; using every endeavour to raise them from their deplorable condition, and cheerfully performing every beneficent and friendly office towards them; then shall we stand represented by the *Good Samaritan,*

ritan, and thus shall we recommend our- SERM.
selves to the favour of our heavenly Father, XVII.
our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who has promised to acknowledge us as his disciples, by that especial distinction, that "*we shew love to another.*" We shall likewise, by such charitable dealings, no less recommend ourselves to the approbation and good will of the rest of the world. For though the course of things here below may not ever proceed so fairly, as to afford every good man the just reward of his benevolence; yet, generally speaking, and even as the world is constituted, a humane and upright man, one who makes it a matter of conscience how he either denies those services to another he would hope to receive himself, or does that prejudice to another he would himself desire to avoid, does gain esteem and favour. He is commonly honoured and beloved; every one places a confidence in him; his own concerns in life proceed more smoothly and with fewer difficulties, and when these do happen, and, through ill chance and misfortune, the storms of life beat hard against

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against him, others are always the more forward to render him that assistance which he in his prosperity generously held forth to them.

To conclude.—Light enough in this matter is now come into the world. That mental darkness, that made it necessary to use care and management, and the artful insinuation of fables and parables, to enlighten and instruct us, is at once provided for by that great commandment, "*that we* "*should do unto others whatsoever we would* "*that they should do unto us.*" This tends to remove all difficulties in the way of our judgment; for however our duty may be hidden from our view by passion and prejudice, our feelings, our wishes, and desires are perfectly intelligible to us. In all cases whatsoever, therefore, where our neighbours may have need of our help, we have nothing to do, but in imagination to change conditions with him, and to conceive *ourselves* to be cold or naked, poor or famished, fallen into misfortunes, or into the hands of wicked men; then let us appeal

peal to our own minds to determine the relief that is requisite; let us consider within ourselves what *we* should require at the hands of others; what comfort, aid, and assistance *we* should be anxious to obtain. Whatever our minds suggest to us on every such occasion, will be a just conclusion from the circumstances of the case, and whether they be injured or oppressed, wounded in body or in mind, whatever calamities they labour under, we shall be sure to be right in administering relief, if we do exactly to them, as we judge and feel that we should wish they should do unto us, under a like pressure of trouble and affliction. Neither need we doubt that we fully discharge the duty of a neighbour, when, like the good Samaritan in the parable, we, to the utmost of our power and means, shew mercy and pity on them!

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SERMON XVIII.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

LUKE XVI. 8.

And the Lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

THESE words occur in the parable related in the Gospel of the day. A certain steward, the parable states, having administered the concerns of his master ill, began to be alarmed at the situation he had brought himself into, and to bestir himself accordingly to provide the best he could against his approaching dismissal and degradation. If reduced to absolute want, he knew that his own exertions would fail him; labour he had been unaccustomed to, and he could not stoop to solicit charity. "*Dig, he could not, and to beg he was*

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"*ashamed.*" He, therefore, very unwarrantably called together his lord's debtors, and, having in his hands the several securities they had given, he gave each man a power of secretly lessening his debt, that by thus serving their interests, he might secure their friendship when he should be put out of his stewardship. This inequitable proceeding came to his lord's ears, and, as the text states, the "*Lord commended* "*the unjust steward.*" When we consider the drift of all our Saviour's parables, much more when we reflect on his own incomparable purity and goodness, it must needs appear to us impossible, that the unjust dealings of this profligate steward should, as such, be ever represented as the objects of commendation and applause. And, indeed, if we take the whole context together, we can scarce make such a mistake, for we shall then understand, that the unjust steward was not commended because he was unjust, but because he "*had acted* "*wisely:*" that is, in fact, prudently; with some degree of forecast and consideration. And yet neither was this, in his particular case,

case, the direct subject of commendation, SERM. but, (as we may collect from the following XVIII. words) it is only meant to be implied, that a similar prudence, under other circumstances, would be commendable. In short, the lesson conveyed to us in the parable amounts to this, that in worldly concerns we find the most careless and dissipated possessed, in case of necessity, of prudence enough to make some provision for futurity, whereas, oftentimes, those much better instructed in the real concerns of life, the ways of Providence, and the hopes of religion, betray a woeful neglect of these matters, to the hazard of losing the great gift of immortal happiness, promised them, in the world to come. This should be carefully attended to, lest the mere words of the parable should in any way mislead us; for how could any commendation be due to the unjust steward, except for the ingenuity of his prudence and management. Besides his previous negligence, could any thing surpass his treachery, and breach of confidence, in calling together all his lord's debtors, and urging them to join him in an act of notorious fraud and

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dishonesty? His *injustice* was not intended to be passed over, or extenuated, we may be sure, from the very title given him of the *Unjust Steward*. Thus far, however, I have thought it fit to clear the matter up, because any mistaken division of the words of the text, might lead to a very different interpretation from what was designed.

But let us proceed to apply the parable to ourselves. The great and mighty God has so placed us in this world, that be our outward condition what it may, we have all a stewardship to answer for. The most destitute of worldly goods has still the gifts of reason, and free will, to account for; these are very important talents, entrusted to his care, his management, and discretion; scarce any other can be misapplied but through a direct abuse of these. However, in the course of the parable, we are particularly cautioned in regard to the "*mammon of unrighteousness.*" This is an expression which, though not actually familiar in itself, is yet capable of a very plain and simple interpretation; it may justly be held to stand for all such worldly attainments

attainments or possessions, the abuse of which must necessarily involve us in distress and despair. "*To whomsoever,*" saith the Scripture, "*much is given, of him will* "*much be required;*" and so it is, in the nature of things, that the more we are possessed of, the more we must be liable to commit some abuse or other. And yet it is hard to fix any bounds to what is in fact our stewardship; for those who are in a state of want are as much in a state of trial as those who are blessed with affluence and abundance; and even the Mammon of unrighteousness may, without much force, be brought to include every condition to which may be annexed *a temptation* to do wrong, according to the memorable request of Agur; "*Give me,* "*O Lord, neither poverty nor riches, lest,*" in the one case "*I be full and deny thee,* "*and say who is the Lord?*" or, "*lest I be* "*poor and steal, and take the name of my* "*God in vain.*" Here riches and poverty might equally become the unrighteous mammon, by drawing us away from our duty to God. And thus, figuratively, *any* allotment may be converted into "*a mammon of* "*unright-*

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"*unrighteousness*," though, generally speaking, it is usually held to stand for *riches*. We are admonished, in the parable, to make to ourselves "*friends of the mammon* "*of unrighteousness*," following herein, not by any means the fraudulent and corrupt doings of the unjust steward, but his precaution and foresight; he is represented as making to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, by so engaging his lord's debtors in a fraudulent conspiracy against him, that, first, they should be so obliged to him as to receive him when put out of his stewardship; and, secondly, by being made confederates with him, should be equally interested not to make a discovery. This, then, was a step to take as full of worldly wisdom and cunning as it well could be. Such prudence, therefore, may well be made an example to others, though here applied in so bad and unjustifiable a manner; for, on this very account, it carries a degree of reproach with it, if *we* can neglect concerns of infinite more importance. What comparison, for instance, can there be, between

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the loss of a temporary office, such as this stewardship in the parable was, and the loss of our promised inheritance in Heaven, honor, and glory, and happiness eternal? What a shame must it be, to see the children of this world, labouring without ceasing after worldly possessions; not dejected or discouraged by difficulties and dangers; not turned aside by any impediment or hinderance; not baffled by any stratagem or artifice; and all this to possess themselves of frail, perishable, and transitory goods, and yet the children of light, with the hopes of Heaven, and the fears of Hell before them, using no diligence, but rather deterred by every trifling circumstance, from pursuing the important objects held forth to them; it is almost incredible that men should be so infatuated, and yet the case is so common that we cease to wonder at it. Such a stewardship as the prodigal in the parable held, might be continued to him, according as he himself should have care and management enough, either to fulfil the duties of it punctually, or to cover over and conceal any

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any misdoings by artifice and deception. But the stewardship *we* hold, in regard to the supreme God, is of no tenure that depends on our own discretion; we may be called to account to-day, to-morrow, or any moment within the whole compass of our life, whether we shall have administered our trust faithfully, or wasted our talents neglectfully. If put out of our stewardship with disgrace and ignominy, that is, if we die without having repented of our sins, and having made light of the redemption purchased for us by Jesus Christ, there is no alternative left. There is no digging, no begging, that can repair our loss; we shall be cast out from the eternal habitations of heaven, and sent into utter darkness. And shall the children of this world be wiser in their way, and prepare for all sorts of accidents, so that if one endeavour fail, another may succeed, and no provision be made against that great and irrevocable day of account, when every man is to receive his final doom, and be recompensed for ever according to that which he hath done in the flesh. Represent

present to yourselves the two states I have thus brought into comparison. The situation of the unjust steward was surely bad enough; he had wasted his Lord's goods, and no doubt therefore all his own: he was not fitted to struggle with hard fortune; to dig he had not learnt; to beg he was ashamed; and yet he was in danger of being dismissed with heavy reproaches from his stewardship: but still there were many chances before him. If the virtuous and the good should shun him, yet there might be sinners enough like himself, who would supply him with common necessaries, and even receive him into their houses. Prudence therefore, and a little management only, might secure him many comforts even after the forfeiture of his stewardship. But with mankind in general, the day of reckoning is in its consequences final and decisive. SERM. XVIII.

Of all the blessings bestowed upon us here below, whether natural, as reason, free-will, health, and offspring; or else worldly endowments, as riches, splendor, learning,

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learning, or authority, we shall be called to give a strict and scrupulous account. If we have made no provision, and conciliated no friends, before this awful day of retribution, we shall be shut out from the kingdom of heaven, and other habitations there will be none to receive us. God Almighty seeth all things, and has left nothing intermediate between heaven and hell; so that when once cast out from our stewardship by the eternal Father, no subterfuge will save us, no being whatsoever can have a place of refuge to open to us. Is it not shocking to think, that with such a risk and hazard before us, so much misery awaiting the negligent, and such exalted blessings held forth to the vigilant and careful, we can yet bring ourselves to be more watchful over our worldly concerns, than over such as must affect our eternal happiness hereafter! Yet so it is beyond all doubt. Sensible things make a sure impression, invisible things have not half the weight. We take thought daily what we shall eat and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, for hunger

ger and thirst and nakedness are evils that sensibly afflict us, but we, all the while, neglect to seek after the kingdom of God, where no such wants can ever beset us. The instruction which the parable is meant to convey, might almost be confined to what I have said above, and yet I cannot help thinking it admits of being extended very much further, and *too much* instruction we *cannot* derive from it. It does not signify, in fact, whether we get at the exact interpretation of the mammon of unrighteousness, because, let it signify what it will, if other things bear to us a similar relation, it may as well stand as a general expression for all of the same complection. It is generally held to signify riches, which being frail and uncertain, liable to administer to our worst desires, and seldom accumulated to any great amount without some injustice or other, may well deserve such a title of reproach. To make to ourselves friends therefore of the mammon of unrighteousness, taken in this sense, would seem of course to signify that we should use riches worthily and properly, in relieving the

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the needy, comforting the sorrowful, feeding the hungry, or providing carefully and prudently for the future prosperity of our families: by so doing, riches may be rendered our best friend; for when we are called from our stewardship by death, and summoned to our account, the blessings of the poor and needy we have relieved, of the sorrowful we have comforted, of the hungry we have fed, of the naked we have clothed, or the filial gratitude of a virtuous prospering offspring, will go up to heaven before us as evidences and memorials, to smooth our reception into the kingdom of God. And thus it is with other things;—poverty may be rendered a blessing, or else "a mammon of unrighteousness." We shall make friends of it if we bear it patiently, without any slothful repining or angry murmuring. If we are led to apply ourselves to the labours of honest industry to remove its weight, and lessen its difficulties; if we receive it at the hand of God with humility and confidence, persuaded in our minds, and acting up to such a faith, that if we do well our poverty will be our gain;

gain; God being able and willing to give us as a recompence for our obedience, a more abundant weight of riches in the world to come; but a sad mammon of unrighteousness will poverty be, if it tempts us to dishonest actions; to defraud others of their possessions by force or theft, cunning or deceit; to murmur at the decrees of heaven, and blaspheme the God that made us what we are. Every gift intrusted to us, and even every good withheld, may thus be rendered either friends to us at the day of account, to open the gates of everlasting life, or else bitter enemies here below, as well as evidences against us hereafter to convict and condemn us. Even health, that fairest boon of heaven, without which no comfort is to be had, even this may be rendered a mammon of unrighteousness, and a dangerous enemy, unless we are very careful always to render it our friend. See how carelessly and thoughtlessly many pass their time, on no other account but because health permits them. Their spirits are light, and their passions strong; sober thought, reflection, industry,

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industry, and application of all sorts are dull and stupid to them; riot and debauchery, intemperance and idleness, work in time their ruin; but those who have been afflicted with sickness and disease, know better the value of health, the danger of intemperance, the delusions of vanity and idleness. Besides, they have seen the brink of the grave, and know by how many cross accidents they may be suddenly put out of their stewardship. When therefore sickness and sorrow are removed, their nerves braced, and their faculties strong and active, they waste no time in riotous living, they exhaust not their recovered strength, by intemperance and debaucheries, but they apply themselves to honest labour and prudent management; they set examples of sobriety, industry, and temperance, preserving their bodies strong, and their reason vigorous. When death calls these to account, they shudder not at the summons. They have made to themselves friends, of the blessings others have abused to their loss and ruin: and now that mortal life fails them, and their trust is at an

an end, God and their Redeemer stand ready to receive them into everlasting habitations. It is thus that the children of light may render themselves wiser in their generations than the children of this world; not by more care, but only by equal care, for the objects are transcendently greater. If it is folly to neglect our earthly concerns, it is madness in the extreme to give no thought to our concerns beyond the grave; so, if it is wise and praiseworthy to give heed to the affairs of this life, the truest and most perfect wisdom must consist in preparing for that which is to come. The one relates to an existence of endless duration, the other to a moment only in comparison, "*so soon passeth it away, and it is* "*gone.*" There is another consideration still behind, and with that I shall conclude. —The unjust steward had no means of making friends of his Lord's debtors, but by inducing them to conspire with him against the interest of his master; thus transferring at once his services from his lawful Lord, to his unjust and fraudulent debtors. And this is too much the way of the

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the world in general. Naturally the things of this world stand in much opposition to the things of heaven, as darkness to light. Of a hundred that we should advise to make to themselves friends of the transitory possessions of this life, ninety-nine probably would think it consisted in bestowing all their attention on them, to make them yield the most pleasure, and administer the most vain delight they were capable of; yet in fact the only way to make them real friends, is to bestow no more care on them than they strictly deserve: as far as they may help us to pay our great debt of duty and gratitude to the author of our being, so far it is right to attend to them; but when the pursuit or enjoyment of them is in any way incompatible with the duty we owe to God, if they draw us aside from the paths of virtue and religion, that instant they become our enemies; the most insidious and base enemies, withdrawing us from our allegiance to the most gracious and best of beings; in short, we cannot serve God and mammon both: the latter must be made subservient

servient to the former, for the love of both consists not together. All the faculties we possess, therefore, let us exert and employ to the glory of God; and even if we are possessed and endowed with all the external goods of fortune, let us bring them over to the service of our heavenly Father also, and never encourage by our own infidelity the too general opposition between God and mammon. The innocent enjoyment of the pleasures of life, and even wealth acquired honestly and applied worthily, are neither forbidden or denied to us; they need only become the mammon of unrighteousness to us, if we abuse them ungratefully, or suffer ourselves to become enslaved by them; they may be made our *friends* by care and prudence, even so as to be a recommendation to us hereafter, and passports for us to the joys of heaven. SERM. XVIII.

SERMON XIX.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

JOHN I. 23.

And he said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Esaias.

AS the Church draws nearer and nearer to her celebration of the nativity of our blessed Lord, suitable portions of Scripture are selected to usher in this great event. And now that he is, as it were, upon the very dawn of his appearance, we hear the voice of his forerunner preparing the way before him. It was a custom in the East, when their kings engaged in any expedition, or undertook any journey, which should carry them through desolate or uninhabited countries, to send their harbingers before them, to provide all

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things suitable to their accommodaton, and pioneers to open the passes, level the ways, and remove all obstructions. It is probably from this custom, that the Prophet referred to by St. John took his idea. There is something exceedingly grand and magnificent in it, if taken in its most literal acceptation; but nothing can exceed its sublimity when applied to the forerunner of our blessed Saviour. He came indeed to "*make straight the way of the Lord,*" by calling sinners to repentance; by "*turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;*" but not to anticipate the Evangelical interpretation of the text at present, let us first consider some of the passages of the Old Testament, wherein the peculiar presence of Jehovah is figuratively set forth. It is to the 40th chapter of Isaiah that the Evangelist refers in the words of my text; a chapter which is supposed to have had at least a two-fold, according to some interpreters, a three-fold meaning. It has been held to refer both to the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and to the deliverance of the Jews from their

their captivity in Babylon. But no commentators have denied its direct allusion to the advent of the Messiah, in regard to which the most figurative expressions in it are highly appropriate, and the boldest flights of poetry no exaggeration. The forerunner of the blessed Saviour of the world had more to do than to make the rough places smooth, and the crooked straight; and yet these terms are strictly applicable to his commission. If, in contemplation of the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, the Prophet could cry out, "*Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith* "*your God; speak ye comfortably to Jeru-*" *salem, and cry unto her, that her warfare* "*is accomplished, that the expiation of her ini-*" *quity is accepted,*" what is this to the purport of Christ's mission, who came to deliver the whole world, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, from the dominion and bondage of *sin?* Whenever the peculiar interposition of Jehovah is to be described by the Prophets, their language becomes highly animated, and the whole creation is brought to do homage to its author. "*When* "*Israel*

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"*Israel came out of Egypt,*" says the Psalmist, "*and the house of Jacob from among*
"*strange people, Juda was his sanctuary,*
"*and Israel his dominion. The sea saw that*
"*and fled; Jordan was driven back.—Trem-*
"*ble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,*
"*at the presence of the God of Jacob!*" And in the 68th Psalm, alluding to the same event, "*O God, when thou wentest forth be-*
"*fore thy people; when thou wentest through*
"*the wilderness, the earth shook, and the*
"*heavens dropped at the presence of God.*" In these passages, it is true, there is as much of fact as poetry. "*The sea*" really "*fled*" at the command of God, and "*Jor-*
"*dan was driven back:*" "*the earth*" did "*shake*" when the Law was given from Mount Sinai, and "*the heavens dropped*" manna to feed the people of God: however, in both these instances, and many others that might be referred to, we always find the presence of God described as operating the most stupendous effects, and occasioning the greatest revolutions. When the forerunner of the blessed Jesus appeared, a revolution was to be effected, the

the most important and stupendous that could be thought of; not the subversion of lofty hills, but the conversion of mens' hearts; not the levelling of mountains, or raising of vallies, but the bringing low the proud thoughts of man, and comforting the meek and humble. He came to preach repentance, and to foretel the remission of sins, through Christ. His office was preparatory to the actual appearance of the Redeemer, and his doctrines were all applied to procure him that reception, which, in the gracious purposes and designs of his divine will, he most desired. No pomp or pageantry was necessary; the kingdom of heaven indeed was at hand, but then it was a spiritual kingdom; its ensigns of royalty were peace and pardon; it required not the homage of shouts and acclamations, but that all men would prepare to receive it, by submitting to the baptism of repentance. This was the mark by which they were to be distinguished, when he that was mightier than John should come. The holy Baptist had many strong prejudices to combat peculiar to the times; the Jews had

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had a very erroneous notion of the coming of the Messiah, and even in their attention to the Law, they had fallen into many corruptions, the most opposite to the true spirit of Christianity that can well be conceived. So that in "*preparing the way of* "*the Lord,*" and "*making ready the people*" for the reception of the Gospel, he had more to do of a spiritual tendency, than the most rapturous flights of prophetic language could adequately describe. But it is a hard task, at *all* times, to "*turn the* "*hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the* "*just.*" And it is to be doubted, whether we, who are obviously free from the prejudices of the Jews, and have long been taught to worship God in spirit and in truth, (not relying on any mere ritual services), are better disposed to receive our Saviour as we should do, than the multitudes who flocked in crowds to the baptism of John. The cases are parallel, and the comparison is exceedingly worth your attending to. Christ is at hand, to fulfil all that John foretold. And though indeed he had much of mercy and loving kindness

kindness to proclaim; though he had to tell the world in general, that upon certain conditions "*their warfare was about to be* "*accomplished, and their iniquities pardoned,*" yet it will be but wise in us to look to the other parts of his prediction, which represent the Messiah in his judicial capacity. Among the numbers that came out to him, "*from Jerusalem, and Judea, and all* "*the region round about Jordan,*" [Mark i. 5.] there were many of the two Jewish sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees; the former of whom contented themselves entirely with the form of godliness, without the power thereof, being noted for their vain pretences of religion and hypocritical devotions; the latter denied two of the most fundamental articles of all religion—the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, and the existence of spirits. To such as these John had nothing comfortable to proclaim, except they also should not only be willing to receive his baptism of repentance, but be ready to bring forth fruits corresponding. He reminded *them*, therefore, that the kingdom of God was at hand, in terms most

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most awful and alarming. Now, says he, you must no longer think of trusting to your own vain and hypocritical pretences; you must no longer depend upon an empty shew of religion, or upon any false persuasions of there being no future state of retribution; you must no longer think to compass the joys of heaven, or avoid the pains of hell, upon any easier terms than that of an exact and thorough reformation of your hearts; for he who is coming, "*his* "*fan in his hand, and he will thoroughly* "*purge his floor, but the chaff he will burn* "*with fire unquenchable:*" "*and now also* "*the axe is laid unto the root of the trees;* "*therefore, every tree which bringeth not* "*forth fruit, is hewn down and cast into the* "*fire.*" In such terms did the holy Baptist, who otherwise was the harbinger of peace and pardon, address those who were not duly prepared for the Advent of our Lord; and we cannot in the least doubt but that the warning is of the same importance at all times and seasons. The first appearance of our Lord was close at hand undoubtedly when John preached; but can any of us tell whether his second coming

may

may not now be as near? For his second coming we should all prepare; for though it may not fall out while we are actually alive, yet, in its effects, it can never be further from us than the natural limits of our mortal life; and we shall be sure to be called forth from our graves when he does appear, to give an account of all we shall have "*done in the body, whether it be good,* "*or whether it be evil.*" But as men are always apt to be dull of apprehension as to remote consequences, and very backward in fleeing from the wrath to come by timely repentance and amendment, it is with peculiar propriety that the Church varies her services so, as to recal to our remembrance, in the most striking manner, the principal events and circumstances of the gospel dispensation; and nothing can be more full of wholesome admonition than the several services in particular appropriated to the Advent of our Lord. In the Collect of the first Sunday, we are directed to pray to God "*to give us grace,* "*(now in the time of this mortal life, in* "*which Jesus Christ came to visit us in great* "*humility)* SERM. XIX.

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" *humility) to cast away the works of dark-*
" *ness, and put upon us the armour of light.*"
And why ? For the most exalted ends possible, namely, " *that in the last day, when*
" *Christ shall come again, in his glorious ma-*
" *jesty, to judge both the quick and dead, we*
" *may rise to the life immortal !*" In the second Collect, we are reminded of the great importance of the written word, the word of life ; " *profitable unto all things, having*
" *promise of the life that now is, and of that*
" *which is to come.*" And to prepare our souls properly for the future appearance of our Lord, we beg that we may have grace, " *in such wise*" to receive these holy Scriptures, " *to hear them, read, mark, learn,*
" *and inwardly digest them, that by patience*
" *and comfort of God's holy word, we may*
" *embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope*
" *of everlasting life, which he hath given us*
" *in our Saviour Jesus Christ.*" In the third Collect, a very apt similitude is pointed out, between the Baptist and the existing Ministers of God's word—a similitude that could not be more concisely stated, or yet put into terms more forcible

cible and strong, pregnant with instruction both to pastors and their flocks; admonishing the former to consider of the very high importance of their calling, and reminding the latter of the propriety of attending to the doctrine taught them. SERM. XIX.

"*O Lord Jesus Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee; grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that, at thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.*" The fourth Collect, appropriate to this very day, so near to the celebration of Christ's nativity, is aptly put into the form of an invocation, expressive of our spiritual wants of succour and assistance. In this we acknowledge ourselves ready to receive him, and prepared to rejoice in his presence. "*O Lord, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might*

"*succour*

SERM. XIX. "*succour us, that whereas through our "sins and wickedness, we are sore let and "hindered in running the race that is set be-"fore us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may "speedily help and deliver us through the "satisfaction of thy Son, our Lord.*" Now, I cannot think it possible that the hopes and expectations which Christianity opens to our view, the weaknesses and infirmities incident to human nature, the precious benefits of Christ's mission, and the duties incumbent on the sincere professor of the Christian faith, could ever have been brought into a smaller compass, or yet more fully set forth, than in these four beautiful prayers. They leave us at no loss, as to the preparation necessary for the coming of our Lord and Saviour; they point out the only means whereby we may be made partakers of his holy kingdom; they fully express the importance of his incarnation, and fully instruct us how to apply to ourselves the benefits of it. But these prayers are not now for the first time to be offered up; they have been offered up before; we *have prayed* for these graces and this assistance already. It will be-

come

come us then to consider what we have done on our part to give effect to them. Have we turned away from any one deed of darkness, or cultivated any one virtue the more, by way of preparation for the coming of our Lord? For this was Christ manifested, "*that he should destroy the* "*works of the devil*;" and shall we pretend to hail his coming, and yet continue, through our sins and wickedness, in open opposition to him, and confederate with the very enemy he came to destroy? Shall we pretend to be anxious that we should be found worthy, at his second coming, "*to rise to life immortal*," and yet continue to "*walk in the counsel of the ungodly*," whose condemnation is, to be driven from before his face, "*like the chaff which the* "*wind scattereth away from the face of the* "*earth?*" Have we made his holy word our study and delight? have we turned to it with eagerness to learn our duty, and be taught of God? have we listened with attention to his appointed ministers, when they have, in their respective administrations, read or expounded his word? have

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we opened our ears to receive divine instruction, and our hearts to give it entrance, to the amendment of our lives? Have we been so foolish and presumptuous as to cry out upon Christ, in our prayers, to succour and to save us, without any new endeavour on our part to do the will of him that sent him? Those who will not put such questions to themselves, must be content to have them put to them by others; and even if they should still be so confident as to turn a deaf ear to every remonstrance that is made to them here, yet surely they must know, that when our Lord himself comes, "*in his glorious ma-*
"*jesty,*" they will not be able to evade one enquiry then, or stand mute at the bar of *his* tribunal. I fear it is still too true, that those who would preach repentance to a degenerate world, are like the voice of one crying in the wilderness. The Lord's people in general are but indifferently prepared to receive him; some unfruitful in all good works, and relying on a barren and unprofitable faith. There are many rough places to be made plain, many

proud thoughts to be brought low, before we shall be fit to meet our Saviour and Redeemer—many obstructions of all kinds to be removed, before his saving grace can find its way to our hearts. When John appeared, both Jews and Gentiles were far gone in the ways of darkness; the former misled by their vain traditions, the latter abandoned to all the errors of idolatry, and the mistakes of a vain and abstruse philosophy. The Jews were unfit to receive their King, and the Gentiles their Saviour, without a great and serious reformation of their ways and their principles. But it is well worthy our consideration, that neither the prejudices of the Jew, nor the infatuation of the Gentile, were so unreasonable or so unpardonable as our transgressions. If the Jew was mistaken in many points, it was partly through a misinterpretation of prophecies unfulfilled, or an unreasonable reliance on traditions, which the majority at least were taught to think sacred. If the Gentile was gross and absurd, and without any settled principle, it was because human

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man reason, unenlightened by revelation, could not hit upon any settled principle, to which all men might trust; and if they adopted wild, and even impious rites in their worship, still this arose from their having lost the knowledge of the true God; so that as their gods were of their own invention, their ritual was suitable and correspondent. But *we* have no need to be blinded by prejudice, or to go astray for want of light and guidance; we depend on nothing that is obscure, nothing that is doubtful; we have a sure and infallible principle to act upon, enforced by such sanctions, and so satisfactory to our reason, that while there are no means of evasion, so there are no grounds to dispute about it. John had to preach repentance to those who knew not in reality what repentance meant; he had to proclaim remission of sins upon repentance, to those who had hitherto imagined that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins. They had trusted to external rites and ceremonies to save them, without any regard to the conditions he came to propose,

pose, namely, that of inward purity, and a sincere reformation of their lives: but *you know* the meaning of repentance—*you know* that it is essential to your salvation—*you know* that repentance, without a purpose of amendment in future, is vain and ineffectual; and that such purposes are equally vain, if not followed up by a sincere endeavour to correct what is amiss. If *you* will not be forwarned, then surely *your* condemnation will be just. But let me entreat you to remember the great and glorious events we are now about to commemorate. The blessed Saviour and Redeemer of the world is again set before you, as entering on the theatre of mortal life: "*Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,* "*saith the Lord.*" Christianity cries out to you in a voice powerful as that of the holy Baptist, "*Make straight the way of the* "*Lord!*" Turn away from your evil deeds, and repent, ere ye presume to meet him face to face, to greet him on his nativity. "*Wash you, make you clean,* "*put away the evil of your doings,*" that they offend him not when he appeareth.

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"*Cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek*
"*judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the*
"*fatherless, plead for the widow!*" then will the day of the Lord rise upon you with joy and consolation; then will you be prepared to meet him at his altar, where, commemorating, as it were, by anticipation, what you all know he came into the world to suffer for your sakes, you may receive remission of your sins. Though they should be "*now as scarlet,*
"*they shall become white as snow; though*
"*they be red like crimson, they shall be as*
"*wool.*" There is always some danger of superstition in the use of external ceremonies, and therefore our Church did well when she abolished many, which, in common with the Church of Rome, she once admitted into her services. But if no such danger was to be apprehended, of substituting the outward form for the inward and spiritual design, it might be made a question whether we had not so far laid them aside as to stand in some need now of such symbols, to awaken our attention more immediately to the particular objects

objects of our several services, as they occur in succession. I should be the last to recommend the re-admission of such customs as the wisdom of our reformers determined them to relinquish, (for indeed some of the forms and customs of the Church of Rome have been known to lead to the saddest corruptions of Christianity); but by way of impressing your minds more strongly with a sense of the preparation requisite for the fit commemoration of the birth of Christ, I shall just notice, that in the Church of Rome, the season of Advent was always observed with a mixture of joy and sorrow—joy that the season of redemption was at hand, and sorrow for the cause and necessity of it. Hymns of glory, suited to the higher festivals, were at this time omitted; the more magnificent ornaments of their churches and ministers laid aside, and in some places a strict fast observed. But the fourth Sunday in Advent (the day we now commemorate) was kept with great joy and festivity, the accomplishment of the prophecies being so near at end. Here, then, we see the preparation

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paration for Christ's coming was at least rightly understood. Sorrow and repentance for past sins, were held to be necessary to fit men for a worthy reception of their Redeemer. The customs were not amiss in themselves, had they been allowed to take their proper effect; but it is to be feared that, in too many instances, like the vain pretences of the Pharisees, the outward ceremony was all that was attended to. Let us, however, not be in haste to judge others; let us rather consider our own condition. I would hope that *we* may not have passed through the former part of this holy season, without such serious meditation and reflection, such efforts of amendment, and such testimonies of sincere repentance, as may entitle us now to put off our robes of sorrow and contrition, and prepare to meet our Lord with uninterrupted joy and gladness; that, with the blessed Mary, when the day cometh on which the Lord of Life condescended to take our nature upon him, our souls may be fit to "magnify the Lord," and "our "spirits to rejoice in God our Saviour!"

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FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

1 TIM. III. 16.

And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.

HERE we are not only told by the Apostle St. Paul, that "*God was manifest in* "*the flesh,*" but it is acknowledged to be, by the same Apostle himself, "*a great* "*mystery;*" that is, a most stupendous event far exceeding our present powers of comprehension. God was manifest in the flesh, in the person of our Saviour Jesus Christ. By that extraordinary method of taking our nature upon him, he came into the world to save sinners; he came to set right, and to redeem, what in the person of our great progenitor, Adam, had, through the

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the enticements of Satan, been forfeited and lost. Great is the mystery, no doubt, because our senses will inform us of nothing beyond the confines of this world; and it is by reason only that we can apprehend it to be possible that the Almighty God should, in person, visit this earth of our's. But yet, surely, great as the mystery may be, (for what act of God's Providence is not mysterious to our finite and imperfect faculties?) our reason may with ease, and without any extraordinary effort whatever, be brought to assent to the possibility of such an event. We do not see God—we see nothing beyond the stars in the firmament; but does nothing, therefore, exist beyond the stars in the firmament? We have no sensible intercourse with our Creator, but may not our Creator, nevertheless, be present to all we do? We are in a state of probation—we are left to our own discretion for a time; and much is promised to those who shall, through faith in God, act with the same uprightness and integrity, not seeing him, as though they did see him, taking account of

of all their ways. Was God's presence noticeable by our senses, we should scarce be in a state of probation; we should be over-awed by his watchful Providence, and be no longer free agents in any sense of the word. Therefore, that God should veil the glory of his majesty at present, and not interfere openly with the concerns of this world, is what we might most reasonably expect; but that God cannot, therefore, interpose when he pleases, or be present with us on extraordinary occasions, even by assuming not only the form, but the very nature of man, it would be folly to deny; to doubt of such an event, because no such ever happened in our own times, would be as reasonable as for a person who never saw a comet to doubt of the possibility of such a heavenly appearance, though those who had seen one had borne every testimony to such an event that the nature of the case admitted. A comet comes from regions quite remote from the sphere of our ordinary vision; it appears for a time and retires—we know not whence it came—we know not whither it

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it goes upon its departure; we can only know, some from tradition, and some from ocular proof, that mysterious and uncommon as such an appearance may be, it does sometimes happen. God forbid I should compare the stupendous mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God with any trivial event; but it may not be amiss to shew, that above us, even in the visible operations of nature, many things seem to be passing, quite inexplicable and inscrutable to us in the present state of our faculties, and that therefore, though the mystery be great, that God should ever be manifest in the flesh; much greater would the mystery be if God, who made all flesh, could not, for any ends of his Providence, assume our nature, and appear among us. And upon what occasion is it that we Christians are taught to believe that God was manifest in the flesh? Let a Prophet answer; for where shall we find words more appropriate? "*To bear our* "*griefs, and carry our sorrows; to be wound-* "*ed for our transgressions, to be bruised for* "*our iniquities; to take upon him the chas-* "*tisement*

" *tisement of our peace,*" that through " *his* SERM.
" *stripes* we might be *healed.*" You must XX.
all be acquainted with this interesting description of our Saviour's mission. But let us examine it a little more minutely. The griefs and sorrows, wounds and stripes, above enumerated, have a two-fold meaning: First, a literal and true one; for our Lord, as you all know, did endure much affliction in the great work of our redemption. Merciful and beneficent as his coming was, yet how ungratefully was he received! " *He came to his own, and his own received* " *him not*;" he came to bring nothing but " *good tidings of great joy,*" and yet he was condemned as a malefactor, and ignominiously nailed to the cross. But there was a further end in these bitter mockings and cruel scourgings; he came, we are told, to " *make expiation for the sins of the whole* " *world*;" to reconcile fallen man to his merciful and gracious Maker; to avert the anger of an offended Deity, from those unable, through the weakness of their nature, to abide its force, and to take it upon himself; even to " *die for our sins,*" and

" *give*

SERM. XX. "*give himself a ransom for all.*" It was, therefore, the wages due to sin that he came to receive on our account, and he received them to the full. Besides the cruel and disgraceful termination of his precious life, "*never was any sorrow like to his sor-*" *row, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in* "*his fierce anger.*" The account of his arrest, trial, condemnation, and crucifixion, as it stands in the writings of the Evangelists, is such a history of unprovoked insult, cruel malice, and unjust judgment, as never before or since appeared upon record. But in all this, nevertheless, God's mercy was prominent and conspicuous; through the gate and grave of death, terrible as it was rendered by the malice of his persecutors, he was all the while opening to *us* the gates of everlasting life. By his stripes we were healed; for though, indeed, he descended to the grave under the weight of every insult and oppression that could be laid upon him, yet he "*rose* "*again*" afterwards "*for our justification,*" ascended into heaven, and now sitteth on the right hand of God, our advocate and mediator!

mediator! Now was not this an occasion on which, if ever, we might naturally expect, from the acknowledged goodness and loving kindness of God, that he might condescend to become manifest in the flesh? It matters not so much what we are here, as what we may become in a higher state of existence. Here the very best of us are poor and weak, and, in every sense of the term, miserable sinners. If we were naturally incapable of ever being exalted to a higher state, then indeed God might possibly leave us to take our chance with the beasts that perish; but reason and revelation both concur to give us far different hopes. We are taught to believe that, one time or other, we shall be translated to another world, where we shall be admitted, as the Apostle to the Hebrews expresses it, not only to the company of "*innumerable angels*," and of "*the spirits* "*of just men made perfect*," but to the very presence of "*Jesus, the mediator of the new* "*Covenant*," and of "*God the judge of* "*all.*" Now, if such are the hopes we may reasonably indulge, then we need no longer

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longer wonder at any method God should please to adopt to bring us to himself, as to the mere possibility of the thing. As sinners, great indeed seems the mystery that God should condescend so far as to take our vile nature upon him, but as capable of redemption, of being justified through Christ, of being made heirs with him, "*according to the hope of eternal life*," then the case is altered, and we know not how far it may have been consistent with the attributes of Almighty God to have condescended, in order to accomplish our rescue and redemption. Though humility is a grace which no true Christian would ever seek to lay aside, yet perhaps it may sometimes be allowable to take such a view of our nature as the above, and, without forgetting whereof we are made, to contemplate the great hope of our calling, with such exultation as is just and reasonable; for thus, perhaps, may we be the easier brought to comprehend somewhat of that great and stupendous mystery, "*God manifest in the flesh*." That he should come to save sinners is a mystery of mere

mere mercy, and ever must be so; but that he should come to call sinners to repentance, that through him they might have entrance into heaven, and be exalted to everlasting life; here is an occasion at least suitable to the goodness and beneficence of God; and the incarnation of his Son is no more a mystery as to the possibility of it, than many other most manifest acts of his gracious providence. Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be "*the propitiation for our* "*sins, and not for our's only, but also for the* "*sins of the whole world.*" This is St. John's account of the mission of our Lord. And St. Peter, we know, affirmed before the rulers of the Jews, Acts iv. 12, "*that* "*there is salvation in none other except Jesus* "*of Nazareth; for there is none other name* "*given among men whereby we must be saved.*" Now it is often an enquiry made, how are those holy patriarchs and virtuous heathens, who lived before the coming of our blessed Saviour, to receive the benefits of his redemption? There might be some reason in the enquiry, if Christ had been mere man. If he had come merely to set us an

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SERM. XX. example of a good moral life, or even to satisfy our doubts as to our future resurrection by his own resurrection from the grave. For how could these benefits be reflected back upon those who had finished their course of life long before his appearance? But when we come to consider that Christ was in existence "*before all worlds*," that he was "*in the very beginning with* "*God*," that "*by him all things were made,* "*and that without him was not any thing* "*made that was made*," which is the account the Evangelist St. John further gives us of him, then we may easily conceive that, in fact, all the generations of men that have ever lived on the face of the whole earth, lived subsequently to the great scheme of Christian redemption. That long before Abraham was, Christ existed in the glory of his Father, as he himself intimated in his reply to the Jews, John viii. 58.:—he existed before the tempter through whose seductions our first parents fell. This also, in no obscure terms, he intimates himself; "*I beheld* "*Satan*," says he, "*as lightning fall from*

"*heaven*," Luke x. 18. He existed before David, for David himself called him his Lord—(See Matth. xxii. 43. 44. 45.) He was before John the Baptist, if we may believe the testimony of the Baptist himself; though, as to his earthly ministry, the latter was emphatically denominated the forerunner of the Messiah; and as to our Lord's actual coming in the flesh, he was not before the Baptist in this instance, nor yet in his character of a Prophet. Here then we get a glorious view of the method of God's dispensations. We know nothing of the bounds and extent of the creation. The globe we dwell upon may perhaps be but one out of millions of millions, all inhabited, for what we know, by beings like ourselves. We must not be too bold in our conjectures; but what a scene does it open to us, if we may but conceive that he who became manifest in the flesh here, may have been the Saviour and Redeemer of all these worlds*! One mystery

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* This notion the author has treated of at large in a separate publication, which appeared in the year 1801, entitled,

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mystery is no greater than another. That only is a mystery which we have not at present powers to penetrate and comprehend; but when, with becoming humility, we are tempted to cry out, "*Lord, what* "*is man, that thou should'st so regard him,*" as to send thy own Son into the world to redeem us from sin and misery? it is well at least to gather confidence from the dignity of him who condescended to take our nature upon him. The assumption of the flesh united the creature with its Creator; sin was vanquished, and death destroyed; and if we may at all suppose that the everlasting Son of God has been the Redeemer of other worlds, the great scheme of redemption will appear to have been intimately connected throughout with the creation of the universe. We know of a certainty, without any laboured or intricate discussion of the matter, that it has pleased God to create a race of beings,

entitled, Τὸ Θεὸς Τῶν Παντων, or, An Attempt to shew how far the Philosophical Notion of a Plurality of Worlds is consistent, or not so, with the Language of the Holy Scriptures.

endowed

endowed with reason, and, as to all moral purposes, unquestionably free agents; capable, therefore, of falling; capable of disobedience, sin, transgression. But to have created such a race, without providing in some way for their after recovery, though the power and will of God know no limits, yet we may presume to say, such a dispensation of things would have appeared inconsistent with some of his brightest attributes. The Gospel of our blessed Saviour then seems to set the whole in its proper light. Creation and redemption went hand in hand. He by whom all things were made, the second person of the Godhead, was, in the intentions of Providence, "*the Lamb slain from* "*the foundation of the world.*" When (as at this time, this solemn season of our commemoration) he really came into the world, was miraculously born of a pure Virgin, and took our nature upon him, then the great act of redemption was visibly accomplished—then "*God was mani-* "*fest in the flesh;*" for, as we read elsewhere, "*God was in Christ, reconciling the*

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" *world to himself.*" *Great is the mystery of godliness!* that is, it is grand in all its parts, magnificent in all its purposes, stupendously above our comprehension at present, and far exceeding our utmost merits and deserts; yet no greater a mystery, as to its possibility, than a thousand natural effects that pass before our eyes. And what is the share then that *we* have in this great mystery of godliness? Try to withdraw your minds a moment from the concerns of this world; for " *what is this life, it is even* " *a vapour?*" Consider that you have a wretched body of sin hanging about you, which must be put off, ere you can behold the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And yet he has dwelt among us! " *He was in the world,* " *and the world was made by him, and the* " *world knew him not: he came to his own,* " *and his own received him not.*" Does not this shock your minds? Are you not tempted to cry out, as the Pharisees did in regard to the Prophets, " *If we had been in* " *the days of our fathers, we would not have* " *been partakers with them in the blood of* " *our*

" *our Saviour.*" But beware of condemning yourselves by such declarations. Christ still dwells among us! At the very time in which he did actually appear in the flesh, all were not in opposition to him; some *did* receive him; and the same Evangelist, who tells us, " *he came to his own,* " *and his own received him not,*" tells us also, that " *as many as received him, to them* " *gave he power to become the sons of God,* " *even to them that believe on his name.*" But if you would ask me what is the true import of becoming the sons of God through Christ, and believing on his name, and therefore, what is the testimony we ought to give of our readiness to receive him as our Saviour, I shall reply in the words of the holy Apostle St. Paul. In the 8th chapter of Romans, v. 14, he expressly declares, that " *as many* " *as are led by the spirit, they are the sons of* " *God :*" and if this should lead to a further question, namely, what it is to be " *led by the spirit?*" let the same Apostle resolve the question, from the very same chapter already referred to. " *There is,* " *therefore,* SERM. XX.

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" *therefore, now no condemnation to them*
" *which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not*
" *after the flesh, but after the spirit,*" v. 1.
" *For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but*
" *if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the*
" *deeds of the body, ye shall live,*" v. 13.
To " *believe in the name of Christ*" is quite a scriptural expression, but yet so often used, as to be of easy interpretation. It is, in short, to believe in his power and authority, in his divine mission, in his threats and promises; to trust in him for salvation and redemption, to confess him as well in the outward services of our lives, as in the inward dispositions of our hearts; to love, honour, and obey him; and, to sum up all, to fulfil the terms and conditions of our baptismal vow, by manfully fighting under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil. And what have we done in regard to these particulars? What are we prepared to do? Is this our commemoration of the birth of Christ, a mere Pharisaical ceremony? or are we really come hither, invited by the good tidings of a Saviour and Deliverer, to lay down

down our sins at the foot of his altar, de- SERM.
termined within ourselves to make every XX.
effort to merit his redemption, by turning away from our wickednesses, that we may live? Surely we are not come hither, only hypocritically to sanctify his day, heedless, from the moment our devotions are over, how, by the indulgence of our lusts and passions, we "*crucify the Son of* "*God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*" Surely we are not come hither under pretence of commemorating his advent in the flesh, and yet can quit this place, turning our backs upon his altar, and upon those holy mysteries which he instituted and ordained himself as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death and passion, to our great and endless comfort? If our pretended devotions are so lukewarm and indifferent, or rather so base and unworthy, as this, we had better retire from the commemoration of our Lord's Day; for he came to bring no good tidings to such worthless and ungrateful servants. How can we dare to join in the angelic hymn which we adopt in our services,

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vices, if our actions tend neither to the glory of God, the peace of the world, nor to the establishment of the Covenant of Christ's Gospel, whereby the good-will of God to fallen man is manifested and made sure. To conclude—You are called, you are invited, to become joint heirs with Christ in the glory of God the Father! Are you sensible of this? If you are, have you ever studied the conditions upon which your adoption depends? If you know these conditions, have you done your utmost to live up to them? If you have at any time violated them, have you done all in your power to repair the breach? Have you repented of such wickedness, and prayed to God to forgive you? Have you been careful to seal and confirm your repentance by an amendment of your lives, and a studious endeavour, by the cultivation of every Christian virtue, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance? Do not go from hence, fancying it to be a day of joy, because it is so denominated, and so marked by the appointed services. Christ, by his own Covenant, is precluded from being the Saviour

viour of the incorrigible sinner; his coming is big with heavy tidings and bitter forebodings to the perverse and headstrong, and no good tidings of great joy can this day, well understood, bring with it to *them!* But, beloved, I hope *ye* have not "*so* learned "Christ," but that your dovotions this day may have been so fervid and sincere, your sorrow for past transgressions so contrite and humble, your purposes of future amendment so steady and resolved, your praises so sanctified, your hopes so reasonable, your faith so strong, your charity so warm, that they may be regarded in heaven as memorials before God in your behalf. Let me hope that you will accompany me to his altar, there to commemorate what he came to suffer, and did suffer, for our sins! And may God, of his infinite mercy, who "*gave his only be-*
"*gotten Son to take our nature upon him, and*
"*as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin,*
"*grant that we, being regenerated and made*
"*his children by adoption and grace, may*
"*daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit, through*
"*the same, our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

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SERMON

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COMMENCEMENT OF THE YEAR.

PSALM XIX. 2. 3.

2. *One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another.*

3. *There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them.*

IN the Bible-version it is differently rendered: "*Day unto day uttereth speech, and* "*night unto night sheweth knowledge:*"— "*There is no speech nor language where their* "*voice is not heard.*" The instruction afforded us by a contemplation of the heavenly bodies is two-fold. First, they convey to us the brightest knowledge of God's everlasting power, majesty, and glory: "*The* "*heavens declare the glory of God, and the* "*firmament sheweth his handy-work.*" Secondly, they warn us of the lapse of time, our

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our whole life being measured by their several revolutions. But though, in the manner stated, as long as the world lasts, one day may be held to give us reasonable hope of another to succeed, and one night to certify a second to follow, as far as regards the orderly course of the celestial bodies, yet they cannot be held to certify any individual of such a command of time and opportunity. Every day as it closes may be our last; every night that comes may turn out to be that in which, through the will of God, our souls shall be required of us; every division of time unquestionably, whether natural or artificial, should be considered by us as uttering speeches of admonition, and inculcating a knowledge most useful and important to us in the regulation of our lives. No moment once passed can be recalled; each day, as it ends, must remain marked for ever as a day of merit or transgression, to be brought to account as such at the general judgment, when times and seasons shall be no more. The interval between any two determinate periods should, therefore, always

ways be considered as a fit opportunity for reflection, as well to judge of what is past, as to prepare for what is to come. In this way alone can we expect so to "*number our days, as to apply our hearts to* "*real and solid wisdom.*" SERM. XXI.

Since we last met together in this place, one of the longest artificial divisions of time hath come to a close, and we are now entered on a new year. Twelve months more of our lives are passed by and gone for ever, and we are all advanced by so much the nearer to the termination of our earthly pilgrimage. Such a circumstance cannot be a matter of indifference to any considerate person; on the contrary, it must be big with importance, whether, during the period that has past, our actions have been good or evil. If good, what an encouragement to proceed must our approving consciences supply! if evil, how much must remorse admonish us to amend our ways for the future! With some (not Christians) the close of the *day* even has been known to have been made a serious

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rious moment of account, and to be placed on record, as it had been passed, as a day lost or gained to the useful and valuable purposes of life. Nothing could be more reasonable or more consistent with sound and solid sense. In a Pagan it was commendable; in a Christian it should be considered as a matter of indispensable duty. When the sun sets in night, and the labours of the day are terminated, not so much by our own choice or will, as by the providential interposition of the great Ruler of all things, can any thing be more befitting a sensible and intelligent mind, than to bestow some moments of reflection, as well on the hours of activity passed by, as on the solemn hours of rest and relaxation approaching? What can be more befitting than that we should seize that opportunity of offering up our praises to God, for the health and strength afforded us during the busy occupations of the day, and of providing against that awful suspension of thought and will coming on, by making up our account while we are awake to do it; for "*sleep* is so like death," as a celebrated

celebrated writer has observed, that we should not "dare to trust it without our "prayers*." This is an elegant observation, and as just as it is elegant. The appointment of the Sabbath makes a second division of time, admirably adapted to the purposes of reflection and consideration. Six days allowed us for the administering our worldly concerns, the seventh (and only one out of seven!) peculiarly devoted to God. Is it possible to suppose, amid the chances and changes to which we are exposed, that even in so short a space as six days, something will not have passed that should demand of us either praise or prayer, thanksgiving or deprecation? If it should have pleased God to have prospered our handy-work, shall we appear insensible of such a blessing? or if our labours shall have failed of their end, whither shall we fly for relief and redress, but to the Almighty Ruler of all events? The rest that is provided for us should not be made a rest of torpid indifference and indolence; the more our bodies are at rest,

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* Religio Medici.

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sideration, namely, the year; which, being regulated by the apparent course and motions of the greater luminary of heaven, bringing round the orderly succession of the four seasons, has so universally obtained as to promise a general agreement in time to come, however the period of its commencement may be varied, or the lesser divisions, for some reason or other, transposed and altered, as has lately happened in a neighbouring nation; where not only the commencement of the year has been changed, but the course and names of the months, and the period of the week, entirely abolished; the latter, it is to be feared, for the express purpose of getting rid of the Sabbath, or seventh day, the arrangement having taken place when infidelity reared its head in triumph, and was openly avowed (I am ashamed to record it) in a public assembly of the nation, without censure or reproach! It is not necessary at present to take particular notice of any other artificial periods than such as are immediately regulated by the course of the heavenly bodies, the rest being

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ing chiefly multiplications of the former, such as the century of a hundred years, the Sabbatical year of the Jews, and the jubilee of fifty years. It is not to be doubted but that all these stated times and seasons, as they recurred, must have made an impression on every considerate mind; and therefore, on examining the records of the different nations of the world, we generally find some ceremonies instituted to distinguish, with suitable notice, the precise moment of such revolutions. Among the Jews particularly, the beginning of the new year was announced by the priest's blowing the silver trumpet, for which ceremony, though various reasons have been assigned, we cannot be much out, I should think, in connecting it, as many learned commentators have done, with the tradition extant among them, that on that day especially God judges all the actions of the past year, and disposes the events of the year ensuing, more particularly as they had other customs appropriated to this season, that serve in a great degree to support this interpretation; for they were used

used to rise from their beds at midnight, SERM. XXI.
and continue in their synagogues praying and worshipping till break of day. One of their own writers, therefore, scruples not to assign *this* motive for the blowing of trumpets, that it was designed to awaken them to a sense of their spiritual conditions at this awful period, signifying some such solemn exhortation as follows; that those that were sleeping and slumbering should awake, and arise, and examine their past transactions; should seriously and attentively weigh the situation of their souls, consider their ways and works, and turn to repentance and amendment of life; to stir them up to acknowledge the goodness of God, in preserving them through the time past, and to excite them to pray for his protection and blessing for the new year on which they were entering. Whether this account be just or not, it is antient and respectable (more so than most of their traditions), and may serve to admonish us to distinguish, by a similar practice of self-examination, the commencement of our own years; to which purpose,

SERM. XXI. I do not think the custom of ringing bells at midnight, when this annual revolution takes place, as it is observed in many of our towns and villages, is to be regarded as altogether an idle or superstitious usage, but that it might be brought to good account, and turned to high advantage; for the year being the chief measure of man's life, is a most important period, and its termination must inevitably warn us of the shortness and vanity of human life—a lesson the Spirit of God seems to have taken especial care to teach us, throughout all the writings of the inspired penmen, "there being hardly any thing very frail and transitory, mutable and uncertain, but they are used to set forth the vanity of life by; we have it represented as a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again—a tale that is told and forgotten—a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and vanisheth away; we are admonished that our days are swifter than a post, that they pass away as the swift ships, and as the eagle that hasteth to the prey; that man cometh up like a flower, and is cut down; that

that he flieth also as a shadow, and continueth not; nay, that in the very midst of life, considering the precarious state of mortality, we are actually in death, being every moment liable to accidents without number, of every description, and from every quarter; at all events, every pulse and breath doth tell us we are hastening to the end of time, and call on us to dispatch our works while it is yet to-day, never being able to know what shall be on the morrow." Most men have so many misdoings to account for, that it is not a very grateful task to urge them to reflection. The world is generally gay enough, and busy enough, and noisy enough, to drown all reflection; and therefore, as long as there is no need to make comparisons, one sort of happiness is as good as another. But the truth is, we should learn to make comparisons, and to estimate the happiness of wisdom and folly according to their respective values. Happy the man may be, or at least he may fancy himself so, who is indulging himself from morning to night

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in scenes of riot and debaucheries; but this is the happiness of a fool, for it is short-lived at best, and leading to no consequences in the smallest degree desirable —generally quite otherwise, leading to remorse and disappointment, horror and disgust; for the time is sure to come, if life lasts long enough, when we shall be convinced, that such indulgences have been purchased at the expence of both soul and body; the former being degraded by them, and sullied almost past redemption; the latter weakened and impaired, and rendered, instead of a blessing, a burthen to us past endurance. But the happiness of a wise man, by the study of God's word, and adherence to his laws, is founded on a rock. It is to be enjoyed at all times, and even in defiance of any evils incident to human nature; for it is built on hopes extending beyond the limits of this mortal life; on promises that can never fail, however present appearances may be against them. Such a man has pleasure in reflection past all the present enjoyments of the sinful and profane. This is an undeniable truth,

truth, and requires but experiment to prove it; nay, even where our misdoings have been numerous and great, reflection will redound to our satisfaction, if we review those misdoings with proper remorse and compunction, determining to redeem the time lost, by works of righteousness in time to come; so that, at all events, reflection is of the utmost moment to our true happiness, and it is folly to defer it. But because we are not commonly inclined to make to ourselves opportunities for such reflections, it is well if any occur not of our own seeking, and I think none can be more striking than the revolutions of such periods as we have agreed to make the measure of our lives; for these must bring to our minds, as well the time past that we may have wasted or abused, as the time to come in which we have to make up our account; with this important difference between the two, that the measure of the former is knowable, and consequently the amount of our transgressions; but the measure of the period to come, in which we must make our peace with God, or not at

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at all, is precarious and uncertain beyond all things. Let us then cast back our thoughts to the events of the past year—let us narrowly examine into the condition of our souls; consider the temptations we have yielded to, and the sins of all kinds and degrees which we may have committed; let us repent of them all as we recal them to our remembrance, and pray to the Almighty God to give us grace "*to* "*redeem the time so lost or so abused.*" It is impossible for me to know what crimes your consciences may have to accuse you of; but though this must needs be unknown to me, yet remember that there is a Being to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom, by no stratagem or subterfuge, any secrets can be hid; and perhaps, as in the days of the Apostle, the necessity of such circumspection may be encreased at present by the same cause, namely, "*because the days are* "*evil.*" We live in times big with extraordinary events, and few men are so private and retired as not to take some part or concern in them; but there are three more

more particular events of the preceding year*, which most probably have disquieted the minds of every thinking person, and which, therefore, we should do well to look back upon, and re-consider, lest the same circumstances should occur again. And, first, we have had to deplore the continuance of war and bloodshed: war is an evil of the greatest magnitude, and should be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible; nor can it be vindicated upon any lesser grounds than those of self-defence. But as distractions at home cannot fail to give advantage to the enemy, and prolong the war, it becomes the temperate and judicious man to foment them as little as possible; not to embarrass the conduct of the war by ill-timed objections to its causes and consequences; for it is seldom that a private man can competently judge of the former, and the latter are often more unavoidable than we may be disposed to think them. Politics are an intricate study, and the causes of

* This Sermon was preached at Oxford at the commencement of the year 1796.

war

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war may lay deeper than we think for; and as to the consequences, though they are always dreadful and deplorable, and must greatly wound every feeling mind, yet let us not aggravate them, by fancying that in all cases they might have been prevented. No man can command success; and when things so frail and mutable as even the winds and the waves must be trusted to, and besides the chances of open combat, stratagem must be opposed to stratagem, artifice to artifice, and secrecy to secrecy, it is scarcely to be expected but that some things must fail. In such cases the candid man will make all allowances, and the prudent, at all events, suppress his dissatisfaction, while dissentions at home can but encourage the enemy to persist. Another sore distress befel us in the year just closed, from the cry of famine in our streets. Great and grievous was the cry, and no doubt many did most sorely and bitterly suffer. God forbid that any such distresses should return upon us! This is always an event which leads to great misapprehensions, and none

none perhaps is greater than our assigning all possible reasons for it, except that of our own transgressions, which, if we would narrowly enquire into, would probably always serve to vindicate such just judgments of Almighty God. We think we have detected the causes, perhaps, in the profligacy of some, or the sordid covetousness of others, forgetful all the while that both may be but instruments in the hands of God, to awaken us to a sense of our dependance on him, which previous prosperity, and blessings, perhaps without interruption, may have stifled and obliterated. Woful misapprehenions also occur in regard to those who put themselves forward on such occasions to alleviate the evil. If œconomy is recommended, it is aggravating the famine; if the transportation of corn is attempted, for the relief of others in greater want, an act of Christian charity as well as of civil justice, it is called plunder and robbery, and resisted without remorse. Often, too, open violence, in many other ways, is had recourse to—the worst mistake and misapprehension of all; for

SERM. XXI. for in no way whatever can it conduce to any good end, but is always destructive of its own views, and in its consequences leads to every thing ruinous to man's happiness, both here and hereafter. The last event I have to allude to is one in which, though we were all concerned, but few, it is to be hoped, had any share; I mean the base and black attempt upon the life of the Sovereign. Though this may well be referred to the operation of principles not of our own growth, yet that they should have taken any root among us, is a foul degradation of that high character we once were proud of. It was a deed of darkness unbecoming a Briton. I need not, I am sure, enlarge upon the value of the life attacked; it is deeply felt by all good men—by all men of common reflection and consideration. It is felt at home, abroad, wherever civil order, justice, virtue, religion, have a friend; it is felt by millions of faithful subjects, attached to him by long acquaintance and undoubted experiment of his good and gracious government. But let the event warn us of the

the approach of foreign principles. If the war we are engaged in has any pretensions to self-defence, it is chiefly against such baleful and pernicious tenets. Let us vigilantly guard against the propagation of them; they have driven one nation to distraction, and we should fare no better. May God, in the year we have entered upon, protect us from all things hurtful, and grant us all things profitable, to our salvation; all things needful, both to our souls and bodies! May he, who can change the times and the seasons at his pleasure, look down upon us, infuse into all nations a desire of unity, peace, and concord; preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, bless and defend our gracious sovereign, forgive us all our sins, and endow us with the grace of his Holy Spirit, in time to come, that we may learn to amend our ways according to his holy word!

SERMON

SERMON XXII.

ON THE THANKSGIVING DAY*.

2 CHRON. XX. 27. 30.

Then they returned every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the fore-front of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets, unto the house of the Lord.

And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.

So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest round about.

FROM the first invention of letters, by means of which the history of past ages has

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* Preached in the parish church of Shobdon, Herefordshire, on the general thanksgiving day, 1798; and printed

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has been transmitted to us, and the actions of our forefathers preserved, it has ever been the wisdom of man, under all circumstances of public and general concern, to refer to these valuable records, as the faithful depositaries of past experience, and to deduce from thence, by comparison of situations, whatever might contribute to his instruction, consolation, or hope. Thither the statesman of the present day frequently recurs for the better conduct and support of the commonweal. Thither the philosopher directs his view to estimate the powers and energy of the human soul, and to form his judgment of its future capacity, by the testimony he obtains of past exertions. Thither the ambitious has recourse to learn how to compass the honors of this world; to enrol himself in the lists of fame, and rival the atchievements of former generations. Thither also, in his turn, the religious man applies himself for more sober and rational information; and, bent

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upon tracing the finger of God in all concerns of importance to the good and welfare of man, is pleased to discover, in the course of human events, a direction marvellously conducive to the final purposes of Heaven, the constant and eternal will of God; and continually illustrative of his irresistible supremacy, his over-ruling providence, his might, majesty, and power! SERM. XXII.

We are this day assembled together to commemorate a succession of events, which, it can be no exaggeration to say, affect all that can be dear to us and valuable in life! which, for the moment at least, may have diverted from this our native country, not danger only, but irretrievable ruin! for the bold and violent threats of our chief enemy are beyond example merciless. We all must acknowledge it is no common triumph they aim at; but because they see us to be a great nation, they are resolved to depress us; because they see us more happy and content than themselves, they are bent upon throwing us into a similar state of politi-

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cal confusion; because we are willing to abide by the laws and institutions of our forefathers, they insult and deride us with their novel doctrines. I would not wish to alledge more against them from *this* place than is entirely right and true; but I fear I may too justly add, that because they think us in the way to be wealthy and prosperous, they are, at the moment I am speaking, applying all their efforts to plunder and impoverish us; because we have not yet adopted their extravagant opinions, or submitted to their exorbitant demands, they are mustering all their forces to overwhelm and destroy us!

If besides this we consider, that with regard to other European states, by the intimidation of some, and the conquest of others, they are, as to power and command, in a confederacy with all, can we do less than acknowledge the hand of God, in the timely dispersion and defeat of three powerful fleets? Can we do less than "*praise* "*the Lord for his goodness,*" in having hitherto so frustrated their unwarrantable designs?

designs? Can we do less than commemorate with joy and thanksgiving "*the wonders he has wrought,*" for the protection and defence of this our native land? SERM. XXII.

The portion of Scripture I have selected to stand at the head of this discourse, you will know to be taken from the history of the Jews; that peculiar nation, to which, as Christians, we stand related, and whose transactions have been transmitted to us by the care of holy and inspired writers, as St. Paul tells us, for our more especial "*example and admonition.*"

If, however, I had only sought to refer to ancient history for a precedent to go by, in this religious commemoration of the successes of war, I might have been more indifferent in my choice; for there is scarce one historian, even among the heathens, to whom I might not have applied myself, to prove the reasonableness and propriety of such public thanksgivings. Even under the worst systems of religion, when, having discarded revelation, they could devise

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no better than false Gods, and even such objects of worship, as are almost too gross to mention, yet so rooted was the belief of supernatural assistance, so essential did they think the favour of Heaven, even debased as it was by their carnal ideas, that we scarce meet with one record of a war or a victory, in which either some means were not taken to conciliate the Gods previously, or, in case of success, in which sacrifices were not offered up, or the tenth part of the spoil reserved for the altar.

It is therefore not for want of a more general warrant for our proceedings, but through very particular choice, that I have had recourse on this occasion to the history of the Jews in preference to any other history. My reasons will appear as I proceed.

In the struggle that now so alarmingly agitates this portion of the globe, the enemy began their operations on the pretended principle of giving perfect freedom to the mind of man. I call it a pretended principle,

ciple, not only because their subsequent actions have been entirely in contradiction to it, but because, in fact, no principle, as the world at present stands, could be found more inimical to the real interests of human nature. For it is plain, that the first step to be taken in vindication of such a principle, is to discard all ancient opinions as prejudices;* every form of government, however matured by age, is to be submitted afresh to the judgment and choice of the passing generation, and the Almighty to be worshipped (if at all) not according to the light vouchsafed to our forefathers, but as every short-lived inhabitant of the earth shall, in his wisdom, think proper and sufficient.

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* The Marquis de Bouillé, in his Memoirs relating to the French Revolution, speaking of the first promulgation in France of the doctrine of "the Rights of Man," (1789) says, "This, by the manner in which it was applied by the people, and in which it was natural to "suppose they would apply it, dissolved every tie of "social order." I shall make no apology for adding the remark immediately following: "And with the same "consequences will it be attended in every government, "where effectual means are not employed to counteract "its baneful effects." P. 97.

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ficient. Two consequences have already, therefore, ensued from this principle, namely, the entire overthrow of a very antient and long-established government, and the abrupt dissolution of a Christian church. A principle of such a nature must find abettors in all countries; for what country on the face of the earth can be free from persons ready to support a principle, which, to say the least of it, is calculated to set at liberty, all who through pride or vanity are jealous of superiors, or through evil inclinations, uneasy under the just and holy laws of Christianity?

While we probably therefore have to contend not only against foreign enemies, but against many here at home, whom this licentious principle has armed against us, it is become an anxious, though I trust no fearful task, for a minister of the church to address you on such an occasion as the present. If he was to "*speak with the tongue* "*of angels,*" there are those who would tell you, "*it is but as sounding brass and* "*tinkling cymbals:*" nay worse, there are those

those who would tell you, that all his efforts are selfish; that he is seeking not your spiritual good, but his own worldly profit; that by assuming so much as to tell you what it is "*that the Lord requires of you,*" he is above all things invading the pretended freedom of the human mind, and at best only linked in confederacy with those they are pleased to call the tyrants of the state, and equally bent upon deceiving you with strong delusions. SERM. XXII.

I will hope however that no such prejudices have entered here. If they had, I trust in God I should not be the less forward to preach his word openly and boldly! But it is rather to obviate any such prejudices in future, that I selected for your consideration the words of my text. For, it must be allowed, that politics, in their confined sense, do *not* belong to the minister of Christ. "The kingdom of God" is "*not* of *this* world;" nor is it becoming in us, to represent his cause as ultimately depending in any way on the will of man; far less as having to do with the ambitious and

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and worldly views of such as are struggling merely for power, or wealth, or fame. I know, as well as our enemies can tell you, that war, simply considered as the wild conflict of ferocious adversaries, we have still less to do with; the religion of our blessed Saviour is indeed a religion of peace! of universal good-will to man! This even our worst opponents acknowledge, not only to the silencing the Christian priesthood, but by way of charge against the very revelation we glory in. Not only denying every minister of the Gospel a right to interfere in worldly concerns, but even ridiculing us for pretending to rest our Gospel of *peace* on the foundation of the Old Testament, in which, through the whole history of the Israelites, war and bloodshed are introduced as supports to the cause of Heaven.

It was with a view to embrace as well as I could, within the time allowed me here, all these several points, that I selected the text I have placed at the head of this discourse; which if we now more closely examine,

amine, we shall find capable of affording us much seasonable instruction. SERM. XXII.

As long as those natural scourges, earthquakes, tempests, plagues, and pestilence are known to be permitted to happen to the destruction of mankind in particular regions, we cannot doubt but that the most dreadful calamities are sometimes made the instruments of God's inscrutable purposes, and that, to correct and alarm the frowardness of man, the mercy of the great God does sometimes appear to be withheld. When the calamities of war therefore befal us, we are not irrational in considering these also as under the direction of God. Their being brought about by the agency of man, can never make them less natural with regard to the great Author of all things, certainly not less within the power of an almighty and omnipresent Being. The great point is to discover the heavenly purposes, and these can only be fitly studied in the consequences. Now in my text we find it related, that when the nations

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tions, that Jehoshaphat had subdued, "*had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel, the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries.*" It was therefore plainly for the *cause* sake, that the gracious God appeared on the side of Israel. The subjects of Jehoshaphat worshipped the one supreme God; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God of Christianity! Their enemies were idolators, worshippers of stocks and stones, the work of mens' hands. It must also be remarked (a thing too little attended to), that it was the custom of those countries to carry their false gods at the head of their armies, more openly and more directly to deride and defy those who trusted in the God of Israel. Here then we see the beneficent purposes of the divine Being. Under such circumstances, a thing so irresistible as a decisive victory, on the part of the Israelites, was immediately calculated to awaken the enemy to a sense of their own errors in trusting to false gods, and dispossess them of their faith in impi-

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ous and horrid sacrifices, for with such we find they worshipped their vain idols. Here then God might in his mercy employ the ravages of war: the enemy was obstinate, self-confident, headstrong, and perverse, and in a thousand instances stifled even that inward revelation vouchsafed to all, the light of reason, and the voice of nature. Nothing short of the chastening hand of God, made bare and manifest for their correction, could set them right: the consequences were gradual, but such as God purposed. Idolatry was in time exterminated, and the repeated victories of Israel, whensoever they fought under the protection of the living God, "*brought* "*them quiet, and gave them rest round* "*about,*" as often as the enemy became convinced that Heaven was against them. Having thus seen then, that, through the perverseness of mankind, it becomes reasonable to suppose that the Almighty may, consistently with his mercy, "*go forth* "*with the host to battle,*" as in the natural world he is said, "*to ride in the* "*storm,*" for the intimidation and correc-

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tion of a wicked world*; and as the circumstances of our chief enemy are not far from resembling the abominations of the heathen world, having cast off the living God, and fallen down to idols of their own fancy (I allude to their absurd images and symbols of liberty†); having besides broken through the chief connections of civil society, and brought all antient establishments and principles to one promis-

* As there are many who still pretend not to see how the providence of God can be with decency said to be affected by the corruptions of man, overlooking the various analogous circumstances that have place in the natural world, I cannot forbear subjoining the following illustration of this matter, from the Pere Bohours' Thoughts of the Fathers. "This expression of Tertul-" lian's, that God is *good* in his own account, and *just* " in ours, leaves a great deal to the thoughts, and pre-" sents at first the idea of the sun, which of itself gives " beneficent light, and only forms thunder, when the " earth supplies it with matter."

† It was consistent with their modern idolatry, that one of their revolutionary admirals (Latouche) should thus describe his escape from the dangers of a storm at sea: " We owe our existence to the *tutelary genius* which " watches over the destiny of the French republic, and " the defenders of liberty and equality."

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cuous ruin; surely it is not far from the office of a minister of Christ's Gospel to take part in such scenes; to animate the wavering, to strengthen the weak, to profess more openly and boldly than ever, his own confidence in Christianity, and to warn his fellow creatures against the wiles and fallacies of an enemy, who, under pretence of greater knowledge, and more independent principles, would willingly exclude both the wisdom and supremacy of God, from the transactions and events of this lower world. SERM. XXII.

I would not lead you to any vain-glorious confidence in the protection that has been vouchsafed us. It is better, more wise, more humble, and far more becoming Christians, to consider it rather as owing to the errors of our enemy, than to any righteousness of our own; to correct and convert *them*, rather than to reward *us**. Yet as far as the cause we support against them is concerned, it may be allowed us to take comfort, and to indulge

* See Deut. ix. 4. 5. 6.

a hope

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a hope, that victories so glorious and decisive, wherein the Almighty has so visibly interposed in our behalf, may in time turn the hearts of our enemies, and that "all the kingdoms" and states "of those" deluded "countries," like the Ammonites and Moabites of old, seeing that the Lord does thus fight against *our* enemies, may return to a just "fear of God."

Neither let their successes in other quarters hinder this persuasion; it cannot be denied but that in some countries their progress has been unchecked, and the human mind perhaps is in no less danger of delusion on this account, than with regard to the principle spoken of above. The temporary successes of the ungodly staggered David. "*My feet,*" says the royal Psalmist, "*were almost gone, my tread-*
"*ings had well nigh slipt; because I was*
"*grieved at the wicked; I do also see*
"*the ungodly in such prosperity.*" He afterwards certainly corrected his judgment of matters, and in the 37th Psalm comes to a full conclusion on the point, which

which he relates in words too expressive to be passed over. "*I myself have seen the* "*ungodly in great power, and flourishing* "*like a green bay-tree; I went by, and lo!* "*he was gone: I sought him, and his place* "*could no where be found. Keep innocency,* "*and take heed unto the thing that is right;* "*for that shall bring a man peace at the last.* "*As for the transgressors, they shall perish* "*together: and the end of the ungodly is,* "*they shall be rooted out at the last.*" SERM. XXII.

It may be, the nations they have been permitted to subdue resembled them in principle. It is recorded of the Jews, we know, both by inspired and uninspired historians, that whensoever they themselves inclined to idolatry, the course of the victory was changed, and the arms of their enemies prospered, serving thus as instruments in the hand of God to correct and extirpate errors that resembled their own. Such successes, therefore, need not dishearten, but should rather animate *us* to a more steady perseverance. We alone have been essentially victorious, and in this seem to have received

SERM. XXII. received a pledge from Heaven, that if "*we endure to the end,*" "*keeping,*" stedfastly to "*the works of Christ,*" amidst this sad "*contradiction of sinners,*" we shall not "*only be saved,*" but may turn the enemy from the error of their way.

This is certainly one impression that the occasion of this day's solemnity should make upon us. A comparison of principles and opinions may often be fallacious, and it is better to be without such a self-confidence as would induce us to condemn our brethren without good reason: but here the case scarce admits of any possible doubt. The scene they have exhibited *must* offend a *gracious* and *good* God! A mild and inoffensive Sovereign slaughtered on the scaffold; merely because, according to laws established ages ago, he was born to possess the throne of his ancestors*. Innocence

* If this should appear, after the trial that took place, to be any exaggeration of the matter, it should be remembered, that during the discussion relative to the trial in the National Assembly, one of the members (St. Just) actually

nocence and age brought to the same ig- SERM.
nominious end! not only without the cus- XXII.
tomary offices of humanity, but under most wanton and shocking circumstances of barbarity!

actually proposed the putting his Majesty to death, "merely because he was a king." And though it may be objected, that this was only the opinion of one man, and not therefore to be attributed to the rest of the nation, yet it certainly will ever stand as a most horrid circumstance in the history of man, that a proposal so sanguinary and ferocious as the above, as well as an avowal of private opinion so impious and absurd as a direct denial of God, should have been made in an assembly calling itself the Representative of Millions, not only without exciting indignation, but under circumstances even of applause.

The *Philosophical* God, they afterwards set up, dispossessed of all rule over the affairs of this world (Courier Universel, 29 Frimaire, 1793), is of a piece with the mock-trial by which they pretended to justify the execution of their Sovereign.

It might have been hoped, some time back, that the character of this nation stood too high, to be liable to any risk of contagion with respect to *such* principles; but now*, it cannot be denied that in these kingdoms also,

* This note accompanied the Sermon when first printed.

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barbarity! The redemption of our blessed Lord rejected and despised! his altars broken, his temples polluted, his ministers banished! some nations provoked to war with them, while others more weak and helpless have been entirely desolated, robbed of every comfort! individuals despoiled of parents, children, property! Surely the God of mercy, who, when he personally took account of the world,

the same *Philosophical* God is become the idol of many corrupt minds; while the atrocious attack on the person of his Majesty in 1796, intended evidently against the King, not against the Man, too nearly resembles the base and unmanly principles of the French Legislator! Let it, however, be our boast, that *here* they are indeed but *partial* evils! the country in general has still discernment enough left, rather to pride herself on the steady faith and conviction of *such philosophers* as *Sir Isaac Newton* and *Mr. Locke*, than on the new light spread abroad by these self-sufficient Infidels; while, instead of claiming kindred with murderers, as the friends and protectors of their country, in the case of his Majesty's danger, every other individual in the nation execrated the deed; and the wisest and best among us only took it as a signal of alarm, to arm themselves the better against such assassins, as indisputably the worst foes to the public weal.

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and saw it divided, as it now is, into principalities and governments of various denominations, left it in command to us, "*to love one another; to seek peace, and to ensue it; to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for his sake, whether it be to the King as supreme, or to his appointed magistrates and officers; to honour all men, to love the brotherhood, to fear God, and to reverence the King.*"— Surely, I say, it can be passing no unfair judgment on our adversaries, to think them mistaken, and that so gracious a God must be offended by their proceedings. Let us then turn from the consideration of their enormities, to the contemplation of our own condition. God has interposed to save us in preference to other nations; and though we are all of us far from any meritorious righteousness, yet we have a just ground *now* to think our cause is good! We are far, very far from being slaves; we have a good and gracious Sovereign at our head, who, this day, like Jehoshaphat, is in the forefront of his people, praising and glorifying

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glorifying his God! A thirty-seven years mild and beneficent reign has endeared him to us all! The laws he has to execute are mild, equal, and good; and he executes them by his ministers with exemplary justice, in all cases whatsoever, tempered with mercy! We profess still the Christian faith, and glory in the cross of our Saviour. Some indeed would persuade you that *this* is a delusion. But I know not what motive the minister of Christ in this country can have, to enslave or deceive you. I know that it is his especial office to set you free * ! not from the laws of God or man, but from the bondage of sin, and the fear of death! Can it be to your undoing that I deceive you in fulfilling my duty this day, when I only recommend it to you, in all possible transactions of life, "*to do justly, to love and cultivate mercy,* "*and to walk humbly with your God;*" that "*by well doing*" rather than by the force of any other weapons, "*ye may put* "*to silence the ignorance*" and malice of those who now oppose you; to "*trust in*

* John viii. 32.

"*the*

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"*the Lord always,*" and to rely upon Christ Jesus for redemption from sin and misery, and to bear up under afflictions through faith in the promises of a future world prepared for the good, where there shall be no more "*either sorrow or pain* "*or death?*" Listen not to those who would *compel* you to come in, by shutting heaven against all who do not believe in the same way, and to the same extent as ourselves. We say, and we do believe, that whoever is ultimately saved, will be saved by the mediation of Jesus Christ. Those who have had no means of hearing his word, may have their blindness overlooked through his intercession; those who have heard and believed will be abundantly rewarded; those who have heard and *rejected* his heavenly offers, God only can know what is to become of them! Pity them we must; humanity would incline us to instruct them better, and to try to reconcile them to such blessed offers of pardon and peace; our office admonishes us to exhort and to warn them, and to set before them

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them the woes denounced against them; still, however, their final condemnation rests with God. In *this*, however, we are all agreed. *We* say, what the Scriptures teach us, that Christ is not "*the author of* "*salvation*" but "*to those*" who in their lives "*obey his laws;*" now his laws are admitted to be the most perfect system of morality extant, so congenial to the natural sentiments of the human heart, as to have led some vainly to suppose it required no new promulgation; in the worst of times, the distinction of good and evil does not appear to be so lost to the world, but that all men acknowledge the obligations springing from it, though some differ greatly about the motive. But why it should be greater slavery to serve and to obey a merciful Redeemer, who laid down his life for us, and gave us these invaluable laws, than to follow the accidental dictates of our own understandings, and to trust in nothing but our own righteousness, must be left to be decided by those who have less modesty or more subtlety than myself.

self. We must indeed admit that there is more liberty in living according to the private suggestions of one's own fancy, than according to the written and express laws of God; more liberty in judging one's self, than being subject to the judgment and inspection of an all-seeing and perfect Being! But who, that values his own liberty, and is capable of judging of consequences, would live with persons of this description*? Such opinions, however, are abroad; and therefore, as it may well be expected of me as a minister of Christ's Gospel, as well as of all others who are so, now more particularly to "*confess him before men,*" I shall not scruple here to declare, which I do most solemnly and confidently, that, without neglecting any arguments of our adversaries that I can find means to examine, yet every day's re-

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* Though there may be something quaint in the following remark, what can be more reasonable? "*I do not rejoice to hear that men may do what they please, unless I know what it pleases them to do.*"—Burke on the French Revolution.

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flection and consideration only serves to convince me more and more of the truth of Christianity, and of the fatal deception those give way to, who are moved, by any attacks so capable of refutation, to renounce and abandon it!

To conclude—Let us consider the victories we are now commemorating, as a proof that, notwithstanding our manifold sins and wickednesses, the Almighty is on our side—that principles so ferocious and so repugnant to the established order of society, as those of our enemy; that impiety so monstrous as that of rejecting the God of their salvation, will not be permitted to prevail against us; so long as we fulfil all the religious and moral duties of Christianity, maintain the happy constitution we were born under, and waver nothing in our faith; remembering always, that whensoever the victorious Israelites did waver and incline to the principles of their enemies, as I have stated above, God then forsook them also, and delivered

delivered them over to their foes. Let us hope that we are preserved to be hereafter an example to the world, as professing those principles which the God of heaven is pleased to sanction, and which in his own good time may put to silence those who now disturb the world. Let us daily pray to God, in the comprehensive words of our Litany, that he will continue "*to* "*preserve us in battle and from murder;* "*from all sedition, privy conspiracy, and re-* "*bellion; from all false doctrine, heresy,* "*and schism; from hardness of heart, and* "*contempt of his word and commandments.* "*That it may please him to restore to all* "*nations unity, peace, and concord; that he* "*will bring back into the way of truth all* "*those who have erred and been deceived;* "*and, finally, that he will forgive our enemies* "*and persecutors, and turn their hearts!*" So that, contemplating the religion and laws we profess, they may discover, in the protection of God, the evil of their own ways, and be brought back to a sense of what is right. Let us pray the good God

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SERM. XXII. to be the defender of our gracious Sovereign against all open violence and secret conspiracy, that this his realm "*may be* "*quiet*" once more, "*God giving him rest* "*round about.*"

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 51, l. 15, for reason and nature *points* out, read *point.*
—— 52, l. 20, — shall ascend *in corruption*, read *in incorruption.*
—— 72, l. 5, — *sholud*, read *should.*
—— 78, l. 17, — *on* others, read *of* others.
—— 103, l. 9, — *into*, read *unto.*
—— ib. l. 17, — *it*, read *them.*
—— 147, l. 9, — *transcendant*, read *transcendent.*
—— 184, last line, for *liberties*, read *liberty.*
—— 379, l. 15, for *misapprehenions*, read *misapprehensions.*